

"THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE WORLD."

SIX SERMONS

PREACHED ON

THE SUNDAYS AFTER EASTER, 1873,

IN THE CHURCH OF

ST. JAMES'S, PICCADILLY.

With a Preface

BY THE RECTOR.

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PREFACE.

I HAD had the scheme of these Sermons in contemplation for a considerable time before I could make up my mind to carry it into effect. There was enough of novelty in it to give it a certain appearance of innovation, and for that reason alone to render its reception amongst a people averse to change somewhat doubtful. It might also seem designed to gratify a craving for excitement or sensation, than which, as the Lord Himself warns us, nothing is more prejudicial to the firm and deep rooting of the seed of the Word in the soul.

I am well aware that the introduction into the pulpit of subjects of the class treated in this volume is neither unprecedented nor unfrequent; but it is not, I believe, usual to group them together, as is here done, under a common heading, to assign them to a number

of distinguished preachers, to devote to them several successive Sundays, and to engage the congregations with them considerably longer than the conventional twenty or thirty minutes.

Nor, for my own part, should I desire to see a wide-spread adoption or frequent repetition of this procedure, at least in parish churches and on Sundays. The seasons and circumstances which alone can warrant it are, as it seems to me, of a peculiar kind and of rare occurrence. For ordinary parochial congregations, even those in which the poor and the unlettered are few, and the educated and well-to-do compose a large majority, sermons of a simpler kind, and of which revealed truth forms the staple, are more profitable, even if less interesting, than such as are here presented to the reader. The life which the Christian preacher should endeavour to develope, animate, and strengthen in his hearers has its springs in a risen and ascended Saviour. To lift men's spirits, therefore, to Him, where He sits at the right hand of God, rather than to bring Him, as it were, down from above, that He may hallow by His presence our earthly homes and our every-day doings, would seem to be the

true idea of the primary aim of Christian instruction and exhortation.

It is not, however, to be denied for a moment that the consecration of this earthly state, with all its necessary and allowable conditions, circumstances, and doings, was a chief purpose both of the Incarnation of the Eternal Word and of the Holy Spirit's descent into the Church; and thence it follows that there must be place, large and prominent, in every complete system of Evangelical teaching, for the religious treatment of "common things," and for throwing the Gospel light upon topics in themselves purely secular. Only by the use of that light can we duly discriminate between the good and the evil by which we are surrounded, as it is only by the aid of the Spirit from above that we can choose the one and refuse the other in a steady and consistent Christian practice.

But the introduction of the subjects in question into the pulpit is restricted and difficult, by reason of the miscellaneous composition of our parochial congregations. In the church in which the following sermons were delivered there may be found collected on most Sunday mornings every grade of intelligence and culture,

from the highest to the lowest, all the ages of man that lie between first and second childhood, every rank in the social scale from the prince to the pauper, and every variety of calling and occupation—the legislator, the professional man, the merchant, the tradesman, the artisan, and the labourer—besides a considerable sprinkling of those who have been humorously described as having nothing to do and doing it.

It is manifestly impossible that such congregations should be addressed upon topics directly and particularly connected with worldly circumstances or social life, without putting the minds of one portion of the auditory in the very undesirable position of judging the other, and perhaps without provoking from many the remonstrance, “How do these things concern us?”

A very great man, a member of such a congregation, is reported to have exclaimed impatiently, after a sermon not of the plainest and simplest kind, “I wish they would preach to our children instead of to us!”—while a scarcely less competent critic attending the same church complained, on another occasion, of a discourse which had advisedly aimed low, that such preaching was “really childish.” No

one who has well learned the fable of "the old man and his ass" will allow his judgment to be overruled by the dread of such comments; but they illustrate a condition of things which cannot but be taken into serious consideration by those who have to address auditories so extremely miscellaneous as assemble in so many town churches. It would be clearly inconsistent, with due regard to the wants of all in such churches, to discuss upon six successive Sunday mornings, in however purely scriptural and highly spiritual a tone, subjects of the description treated in this volume.

There is, however, in St. James's, as in many other London churches, a service which is ordinarily attended by very small congregations, and those of a much less miscellaneous or, as I may call it, *parochial* character than the congregations of the morning and evening. Of the few whom we gather within our walls on Sunday afternoons the majority are of the class to which, if to any, the subjects here treated will be allowed to be appropriate; while the neighbourhood around the church contains during the London season material for the supply of a crowded auditory of the same character. Into

our hotels and lodging-houses the whole country, not to say the Western Hemisphere, pours its stream of visitors, from Eastertide to far beyond Midsummer, in numbers which occasionally strain our accommodation to the bursting-point. These are of a class lying decidedly above the line which is considered to divide between upper and lower—the class to which, for the most part, the questions treated in this volume are of interest, and, more or less, of practical application. This being so, I may, perhaps, be thought to have been remiss in not having adopted some such scheme as that of these sermons long before, rather than expected to offer for them any such apology or explanation as the present.

To those friends who have so ably and earnestly assisted me by writing and preaching the several sermons, and also to those who, while unable to take part in the scheme this year, have warmly encouraged me in carrying it out, my grateful acknowledgments are due, and are now publicly paid with most hearty sincerity. I must particularize my very dear friend the Dean of Norwich, because of the strength he lent to my resolution and the im-

petus he gave to its accomplishment by undertaking the first sermon, which was to strike the key-note of what was to follow.

I will but add that my list of subjects falling strictly under the same head—*The use and abuse of "the world and the things that are in the world"*—is, as must be obvious, by no means exhausted by the six contained in the present series. I look forward to the continuance of the plan on the post-paschal Sundays of another year, and perhaps of a third, in the full confidence that public interest can still be maintained, and that again, and yet again, preachers will be found competent and willing to follow up this beginning.

JOHN EDWARD KEMPE.

ST. JAMES'S RECTORY,
1873.

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THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE WORLD ANALYSED.

“But this I say, brethren, the time is short : it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not ; and they that buy, as though they possessed not ; and they that use this world, as not abusing *it* : for the fashion of this world passeth away.”—1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

“THE use and abuse of the world” is a Scriptural phrase. And it will therefore be expedient, in commencing a series of Sermons which is to deal with this subject, to examine somewhat narrowly the passage which contains the phraseology. It is one of those digressions from the main line of his argument, for which the Apostle Paul is so famous, and which express so beautifully the exuberance of his fervent spirit, when treating of Divine things. He is speaking of the tie of marriage, and of the inexpediency of Christians contracting it in those troublous times of persecution and necessary unsettlement,

when the relation might prove a clog from the cares involved in it. Nevertheless, if a Christian found himself a married man, he was to acquiesce in that state : “ Art thou bound unto a wife ? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife ? seek not a wife.” Hence, because the relation of marriage brings with it its sorrows and its joys, its human feelings, and its worldly possessions and establishment, the Apostle, rising above the immediate context, takes occasion to speak of these things generally, and to tell his readers how the Christian should and must stand affected towards them. The ties we must sit loose to, as though they did not exist (“ it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none”) ; the emotions, whether of grief or joy, must be tempered and kept from excess (“ and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not”) ; the possessions we must not hold with a tight grasp (“ they that buy, as though they possessed not”) ; and lastly, and still more generally, while the use of the world is permitted to us, we must not *overdo its use*. This somewhat homely phrase aptly represents the original Greek word. Our translators have rendered it *abuse* (“ as not *abusing* it”) ; but that species of abuse is indicated, which results from

overmuch and excessive use—use without restraint or control—the use which the glutton makes of food, and the intemperate of drink. And there is another fine shade of meaning in the word, which it is impossible to exhibit in a translation, but which is traced with wonderful felicity in Bishop Wordsworth's notes on the Greek Testament. He says, "The preposition with which the verb is compounded denotes a downward affection of the mind, which shows itself by a rivetted devotion to its object, and which may be illustrated by the attitude and temper of the men of Gideon, who *fell down on their knees* to quaff large draughts of the water in contradistinction to the three hundred, who only lapped it and passed on. The latter *used* the stream, the former *used it overmuch*. And the Apostle advises to lap the water of the world's flowing and transitory stream, but not to kneel down and drink it."—The ground on which the Apostle bases his advice as to the restrained and moderate use of worldly relations, affections, possessions, business, is that they are transitory, and the time during which it is possible for us to retain them brief—contracted, it may be, for any one among ourselves, into so very short a span as would give us a shock of surprise if we could see the truth. "The time is short

the fashion of this world" (like the ever-shifting scene of a theatre) "passeth away."

This brief review of our fundamental text yields one main answer to the question, to the solution of which these discourses are to address themselves, namely, how we may use this world without abusing it? Unchastised indulgence in its pursuits, its amusements, its society, its innocent affections, *is* abuse. The lawful use can only be found in a large and somewhat severe exercise of self-control.

But it is time that I should address myself to that special branch of the subject which I have undertaken.

"The world" is uniformly spoken of in Holy Scripture as a power antagonistic to God. In order to see how to use it lawfully and to avoid its abuse, it is a matter of prime necessity that we should understand wherein this antagonism lies. We will attempt to analyse the temptations of the world, and to lay bare the hidden source of them.

Observe, then, that, as we all constantly and necessarily inhale the air (or natural atmosphere), so there is a *moral* atmosphere which our *souls* are continually inhaling. And as the air of the place we dwell in has a great effect upon our constitution, either bracing or relaxing it, and

sometimes (if charged with infection) poisoning it, even so it is with the spirit or rational soul; it is open to very serious mischief from the atmosphere which it breathes. Now as the air, or natural atmosphere, is compounded chiefly of two gases, so this moral atmosphere is made up of two chief ingredients, the influence of those around us, and the present system of things, which is fundamentally vicious and faulty.

I. The first ingredient is the influence of those around us, of the society, high or low, numerous or scanty, with which we have daily and hourly intercourse. And when we speak of influence, we do not mean so much any power, which is purposely exerted by one man upon another (as, for example, by speech, persuasion, or argument,) but that unconscious influence, which transpires from the character and conduct of each one amongst us, and which, without our intending it, reaches and affects our neighbour. Now this influence is a tremendously strong force, constantly operating upon us all; far stronger indeed than many direct forces which make a much greater noise in the world. History records the enterprises of great conquerors, whose exploits have subdued continents; of great philosophers, whose discoveries have opened up new fields of research, and new channels for the

thoughts of men ; but history does not (because it cannot) record that constant, noiseless, yet mighty pressure which my neighbour's views, sentiments, conduct are hourly exercising upon me, and mine upon him. This pressure resembles the force of gravitation, the most tremendous of all forces in the natural world, which is constantly operating to hold the planets to the sun, but, because it acts noiselessly, is much less thought of than forces which, like electricity, occasionally flash upon the eye and thunder upon the ear.

If you desire to see how strong a thing is influence, consider the force of public opinion. Public opinion means only the influence of a large majority concentrated in one focus. It is a power well known in this professedly free country, and may be called the only tyrannical power which Englishmen will endure. What cowards does it make of all of us, this public opinion ! How afraid are we of its organs ! How miserably compliant, and even adulatory are we to its slightest whisper ! All honour to the man who has the nerve manfully to resist it, to consider simply the right and the true, and to carry it out bravely without reference to the sentiments which may generally prevail ! Yet public opinion, though it inspires so much

dread, has no actual executive power to carry its sentences into effect. It cannot exercise any physical coercion, cannot punish men in form of law, or shut them up in prison. But the truth is, that the severest of all punishments to the human mind is the being placed lower in the estimation of other minds. "We instinctively prize the human soul so much," says Pascal, "that we cannot endure to forfeit the esteem of a single soul." What repugnance, then, must we feel to forfeit the esteem of the great majority of those souls with which we have to do—in other words, to have public opinion declare against us!

Again; consider the force of what is called a fashion. A fashion means public opinion on any subject taking an outward form, and becoming (so to speak) incarnate. The course of society is continually throwing up new fashions, fashions in literature, in medicine, in religious doctrines, in religious worship; nay, even in the most trivial things, such as phraseology, courtesy, dress. Before the fashion became established, there was some change in the way of thinking on the subject, silently going on in the minds of men. The moment this change begins to manifest itself openly, however little ground in reason it may have, however little capable it may be

of being defended by reason, immediately others are inoculated with it. There are always a hundred men ready to follow a single leader, for no better reason oftentimes than that they are taken by the eccentricity and novelty of his lead. There is something attractive in originality, even where originality is strongly allied to the absurd.

Again; if you desire to see the susceptibility of our nature to influence, consider it as it is in its earliest rudiment—as it is seen in childhood. Can there be a more imitative creature than a child? Our children are all day long taking into their moral being the influences which transpire from our character and conduct—a circumstance which makes the position of parents one of the most awful responsibility. By those whose office it is to educate youth it is well known, by an oftentimes painful experience, that nothing in the world can stand against home influence. All the lessons, all the discipline, all the attempts of set purpose to mould the character of a boy or girl in a right form, go necessarily for nothing, if there is a lax, or worldly, or irreligious tone in the family circle. Nay, mere reproofs, restraints, and admonitions from the parents themselves do little, unless they throw into the same scale that kind of

admonition to which young persons attach the greatest weight—admonition by a quiet and consistent example. The avenues of the child's mind are always open to receive the true impression of the characters with whom it daily comes in contact. Now this accessibility to influence does not cease with us when we cease to be *in statu pupillari*, but only takes another form. We are all, to our latest hour, made of plastic material, and are continually receiving impressions from our own immediate circle of society, who in their turn are receiving impressions from us, and transmitting them on to *their* circles. Men are not gregarious animals, which live in a herd, and have no other relations than those of depasturing the same field, or seeking shelter in the same hovel; they are social creatures, having an awful power of determining the characters of one another (just as, in virtue of their free will, they have an awful power of determining their own character); they are one body for good or for evil, and, as the Apostle says, "members one of another."

We have now dwelt sufficiently upon the truth that the influence of those around us is one chief element of the moral atmosphere which we are continually breathing. Now, add to this the fact, ascertained from Holy Scripture (and there-

fore certain), that the *majority* of men everywhere are either wicked or worldly, or (to embrace both these under one category) *not* walking in the narrow path that leadeth to life. "Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." If the majority were walking in the narrow way, the way itself must necessarily become broad for their accommodation. As it is, the majority are, by our Lord's own verdict, evil. And evil they always will be to the end of time, in any spiritual estimate of mankind. Education, civilization, and the like influences, will no doubt whitewash the surface of society, humanize manners to a certain extent, and present a fair exterior show, but the real inner character of men will remain the same as ever, where grace fails to correct it. (The text says, "the *fashion* of this world,"—not "its *actuating principle*," or "its *real character*," but the form in which it exhibits these—"passeth away.") And the heart will still be true to the inspired description of it, written so many centuries ago, "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."—Now if the sentiments of the heart of the majority are always evil, their unconscious ex-

pression of these sentiments will be (according to the law of influence) a strong force for evil, or, in other terms, a strong force operating to draw men away from God. And this strong force is called in Scripture "the world."

II. We now turn to the second element of our moral atmosphere, the present system of things, which is radically faulty and vicious.

It is no difficult thing to show that evil is inseparably bound up with man's life, and spreads through all his present relations. Take, for example, the pursuits of men. In all civilized life, in all life which rises above barbarism, men have different pursuits, and in the exercise of these several pursuits, supply each other's wants, instead of shifting (like savages) for themselves. Look then at these pursuits. How the brand of sin is on them all; how evidently they are parts of the system of a *fallen* world! Agriculture is the most primitive of all pursuits. But the earth would have needed no labour of agriculture, had it never been cursed for the sin of man. Warlike pursuits have always formed the occupation of a large mass of mankind; and surely the bare fact that war is an inevitable necessity of the present system,—recognized as a necessity by St. John the Baptist, our Lord, and His Apostles,

who never directed soldiers to leave the profession of arms,—is sufficient to show that evil is inherent in it. The art of medicine is a most illustrious and beneficial one; but it would be at once superseded, if there were no disease and no death. Jurisprudence would be unnecessary, if there were no disputes; and disputes there could be none, if every person were willing to adopt the maxim of the great Sermon, “If any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also;” in other words, if all the world were perfectly righteous. The Christian ministry itself would be deprived of its chief function, if there were no sinners to be reclaimed, and no ignorant to be enlightened.—In short, there is no human pursuit, which is not remedial; that is, which does not apply itself to remedy either sin or the consequences of sin—the discomforts and inconveniences flowing from it. Now if civilization (as it certainly is) be a fabric built up by different pursuits (for the division of labour is the basis and first principle of civilization), and these different pursuits be all remedial, there can be no doubt that the whole of man’s civilized life bears the traces of evil.

But, again, consider that the present system of things leads necessarily to the accu-

mulation of wealth and property in certain hands, to the opulence of the many and the poverty of the few. A savage has no possessions, aims at possessing nothing, casts thrift to the winds, lives from hand to mouth, subsists daily on the game which he strikes down with his club, or pierces with his arrow. But the moment the great principle of division of labour shows itself in any community, that moment there becomes a "mine" and a "thine," and what a man gains for his work is husbanded against an emergency. But it is clear that, as all are not equally strong, or equally inventive, or equally skillful, or equally industrious, some producers will be left behind in the race, and goods will begin to accumulate in the hands of others. By-and-by the accumulations will become considerable; and the rich and the poor will part off into two classes. Now in a merely social and earthly point of view this unevenness of property is a very great benefit. As men are constituted by the fall, selfish and self-seeking, the unequal distribution is the greatest possible incentive to progress. Few indeed would be the improvements in the arts, if men had no worldly interest in improving them. If the acquisitions of all were cut down to one dead level, but few producers would exert themselves to make

productions superior to those of their neighbours. But leave men the stimulus of making a fortune by success, and they immediately become energetic, industrious, and inventive.

Such then is the social system under which we are brought out into existence,—the system which is one element of the moral atmosphere which we continually inhale. It is God's will, not obscurely notified in the Scriptures, that this system shall endure till the second Advent of Christ. As regards pursuits and professions, it is the apostolic mandate, given with a primary reference to the condition of heathen servitude, than which there could not be a more degrading pursuit, or one more essentially bound up with evil; "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Let every man, wherein he is called, therein abide with God." Luke, the beloved physician, is to remain a physician still; Aquila and Priscilla are not to relinquish their work of making tents. As regards the unequal distribution of property, it was said by Moses, as the mouthpiece of the Divine Legislator, "The poor shall never cease out of the land;" and a clause was added, clearly showing that this arrangement was to be for all time, because it connects with the existence of the poor the probation of the rich; "therefore I

command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." "Ye have the poor always with you," said the Mediator of the better Covenant, echoing the words of Moses; and His Apostles in almost all their epistles, some in one form, some in another, "charge them that are rich in this world, that they should be ready to distribute, willing to communicate." From which precepts it is abundantly manifest, as against the Socialists, that God has sanctioned for the present the existing system of temporal affairs, and that therefore any proposed fundamental revolution in it would be a violation of His ordinance.

But at the same time, while we are expressly commanded to submit to the present condition of things, it is clearly intimated in Scripture that it is a faulty and vicious system, one to whose spirit we must never be conformed, but constantly look forward to that better one, which shall supplant it at the second Coming of Christ. Those who have read the Bible attentively, cannot have failed to perceive how it depreciates mere human progress, and the civilization which results from it, and endeavours to impress upon man that he is never to domesticate himself in the present system. In the

Book of Genesis, which (in accordance with its name) describes the first rudiments of all things, a most interesting account is given of the origin of those arts, by which we set so much store, and which are the great agencies in promoting civilization. The first city, we are told—and the city, in which men live together for mutual succour, and in commercial dependence, is the great result of civilization—the first city was built by Cain, after the murderer's brand had been affixed to him by God. Then, in the family of this murderer, and among his immediate descendants, property (in its original shape of flocks and herds) makes its appearance, and the arts useful and ornamental. Property; “And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle.” Arts ornamental; “And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ.” Arts useful; “And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.” But Cain, be it remembered, was “of that wicked one,” and he and his family are the representatives of a world “lying in wickedness.” In the other line of Adam's posterity, the line of Seth, the holy seed is found, destined to keep alive the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, and to

make a standing protest against idolatry. The three great patriarchs, whose names are most illustrious in this succession of God's servants, lived not at all in cities, but in tents—a striking symbol, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews intimates, of their never taking root here below, of their not considering the earth as their settled home. “By faith” Abraham “sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles” (tents) “with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Attention should be called in this connexion to that peculiar class of votaries, called Rechabites, whose ancestor had prescribed to them that they should “neither build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any,” but that “all their days they should dwell in tents;” and whose observance of their vow was specially commended and rewarded by God. The object of the rule, under which their founder placed them, was no doubt the fostering in them a spirit of independence upon earthly good things, and faith in a future inheritance.

Then as regards property and wealth, observe how constantly and unsparingly it is stigmatized in Scripture; how it passes with our Saviour

under the name "mammon of unrighteousness," because, as a living divine¹ remarks, "it is certain that in all wealth a principle of evil is implied; for in a perfect state of society—a realized kingdom of God upon earth—there would be no such thing as property which should belong to one man more than another. Property, in its very existence, as being one man's, and not every man's, is a witness for the corruption and fall and selfishness of man—for the absence of that highest love, which would have made each man feel that whatever was his was also every one's beside, and thus would have rendered it impossible that a *mine* and *thine* should ever have existed." And accordingly, as the same divine remarks in the same paragraph, it pleased God at the opening of the Gospel dispensation to give men one bright transitory glimpse of the state to which human society will be brought when the kingdom of God is realized upon earth, when the temporary and faulty system is swept away, and the eternal and perfect system set up in its stead. In the Church of Jerusalem, immediately after the outpouring of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, there was a strong and fervent impulse of mutual love, which manifested itself in the fol-

¹ Archbishop Trench.

lowing extraordinary manner; "All that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." "Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet." In the future condition of things in store for the Church of God, there will be no property, because there will be no selfishness. To attempt to realize this state of things here, while the heart of man remains selfish, would be as great an absurdity as to endeavour to constitute a pure Church, without the gift of discernment of spirits, or to abolish war, while the lust of empire and aggrandizement still finds place in our nature; but not the less for all that is it the state of things to which our hopes ought to be directed, as hereafter to be realized in the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In the light of the above reflections, we are able to understand how and why the world (or present system of affairs) is represented in Scripture as a power antagonistic to Christ. It must be, I suppose, obvious that to live in the midst of a system of things which is funda-

mentally vicious and selfish—a system, whose whole tendency is to make this earth (if I may so say) liveable, to fit it up and furnish it with every resource, comfort, luxury, which refinement can devise and art execute—must be a great drag upon a heart, the actuating principle of which is to be love, and which is taught to expect within a few short years a removal to a brighter scene, where all the luxuries in the world can avail nothing to yield even a momentary gratification. If indeed this life were all, we do not scruple to say that civilization would be the best of all agencies which have ever blessed mankind. In that case, you cannot speak too highly in its praise; it not only provides manifold comforts, but humanizes manners, and refines away many asperities which would needlessly disturb our ease. But if this life be *not* all—if there be a life to come, and to come to each of us very shortly—a life, in which we shall have outgrown our present faculties and enjoyments, and in which the comforts and luxuries of this world shall have no more power to attract us than a baby's coral has to amuse a man, what in this case is civilization worth to us, whose whole business and sphere of operation is to provide these comforts and luxuries? What gratification will the most masterly painting or

sculpture be able to give to the eye, when it sees the King in His beauty? How will it delight the ear to hear the most exquisite strain ever poured forth from musical instrument or human voice, when it has once been ravished with the "Tersanctus" of the Seraphin?

And, meanwhile, there is a great peril in moving in the midst of abundant resources and refinements, lest we should mistake this for our home,—a great danger lest, in breathing a selfish atmosphere, we take selfishness into our moral being, and it poison the constitution of our minds. Oh, brethren, how hard is it for us all to deny (I do not mean by pretence and in profession, but in our own inner man), how hard is it to deny that wealth, and the resources which it commands, are *real goods* at all; how hard to look at them steadily and consistently in the light of a rapidly approaching eternity, and to count them all dross in comparison with the deep inner joy of a soul in harmony with God's will, a joy which even now, by the anticipations of faith, projects itself into heaven! How subtle the snare, even where there is no outward irregularity of conduct, of being conformed to this world, taking our tone from it, settling ourselves down in it comfortably, and inwardly affirming that on the whole (barring a few

accidents, and that very awkward, ugly intrusion of death every now and then) it is a very tolerable world, not without manifold diversions and entertainments !

I have spoken of civilization as having on it the brand of sin and selfishness, and as tending, which it indisputably does, to make this world a place of agreeable sojourn. And this testimony it is necessary for the ministers of God's Word to bear very explicitly and very sternly, at a period when civilization is fast running to seed, becoming overwrought and dissolute, and enfeebling, by its excessive softness and luxury, the moral stamina of all classes. But let it not be thought that there is any design whatsoever of disparaging those goodly fruits of the human intellect, which civilization has given birth to, and which are the result of the cultivation of the human mind. As fair blossoms, verdant foliage, ruddy fruit, may spring from a soil which is nothing else than rottenness, so, although the system and motive principles of civilization may have a great radical flaw in them, we are under no necessity of denying the beauty or wonderful character of some of its products. Literature, poetry, the arts both useful and ornamental, may all of them not only interest the mind, but be

the means of edifying the heart, and greatly furthering God's kingdom, if they are used aright. Let them be looked upon as coming from God, and designed to promote His cause; and in this point of view, and with this function, they will acquire a value which it is almost impossible to over-estimate. God is not love only, but light,—yea, and “the Father of lights;” every light struck out from the human intellect in its collision with other minds, or with the problems of nature or of life, is after all only a scintillation from the blazing orb of the Divine Wisdom. It was by His direct endowment that Solomon was made, without study or investigation, the wisest of kings. It is no less by His endowment, though through the natural means of study and investigation, that the glorious discoveries of science and the noble achievements of art are made. The human mind, with its love of beauty, its capacities for invention and research, is a far more wonderful work of His—one from which far more glory accrues to Him—than the field of outward inanimate nature. Let learning, let science, let art, let literature be made to contribute to His service, let them be enlisted, wherever it is possible, in the cause of religion—let the scientific man bring to light the laws

whereby He administers the universe ; let the poet sing, and the musician sound forth His praise ; let history record the march of His providence ; let fiction give that portrait of human nature, which may reveal its weaknesses and follies apart from God, and insinuate where its true nobility and grandeur lies ; and, where these various products of human genius are used, as they may most legitimately be, simply by way of recreation amid life's tasks and burdens, let it be with the simple view of making the mind a fitter instrument of God's service, and of qualifying it to do well the serious business of life,—and this direction, this intention, will with the finger of Midas convert all that it touches into fine gold of the altar ; and the spoils of the Egyptians, which in *their* hands were mere luxuries and vain adornments, will be employed, as it were, in the framing and decoration of God's tabernacle. I know of no such compendious rule for using the things of the world so as not to abuse them, as that we should trace them up to God as their source, and employ them for God as their end.

And, above all, let the maxims, by which the Apostle seeks to qualify his permission of secular relationships, occupations, and possessions, be laid to heart as often as we avail ourselves

of the permission; "The time is short; the fashion of this world passeth away." We are apt to take a pride, and not an unreasonable one, in those industrial exhibitions of our time, which are monuments of civilization. There you see concentrated into one focus all the rays of light by which art can relieve the darkness of man's estate, all that she can do to provide this life with resources, to embellish and to refine it. There you see, in a word, how beautifully and how commodiously, in the exercise of those mental powers with which God has endowed him, man can furnish his house. But what if the house is to stand but for a short time, if even now there are rents and seams in the wall of it, through which the daylight of the Second Advent is breaking? It behoves us in that case to lay it deeply to heart, that neither for the individual nor for the community is civilization Christianization,—that the labours and gains of the one will be altogether superseded by that better condition to which humanity is hastening, and which will only consolidate, and show the value of the work of the other upon the heart and conscience of mankind.

THE DRAMA.

“The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them.”—PROV. xx. 12.

I HAVE undertaken to speak to you this afternoon on the subject of the Drama, and yet I am well aware that the very selection of such a theme for a sermon will not escape without censure. For is it not an essentially secular topic? What meeting-point can there be, or ought there to be, between the pulpit and the stage? between the direct presentation of the Gospel and the very embodiment of the world? The patent incongruity, I shall be told, ought to have warned me off this forbidden ground.

Some will condemn the subject, prompted by their zeal for the Gospel. They can regard it as nothing less than the prostitution of a great opportunity to waste the valuable half-hour which convention allows to the preacher, in speaking of plays and playgoers, when every

moment abstracted from the lessons of man's corruption and God's justice and Christ's satisfaction is a moment squandered and lost, a moment for which an account will be demanded before the great tribunal in the last day. One stern strong word of absolute condemnation would have sufficed. As in the poet's vision of the lost souls, the voice of the divine monitor bids the Christian preacher not halt before such a theme, but give one look only—one glance of sorrow, of reprobation, of warning—and then pass on.

And others will condemn it on different grounds. They are more concerned for the immunity of the drama than for the profanation of the Gospel. Religion is a good thing, and amusement is a good thing; but do not mix up the one with the other, or you will spoil both. They are ready with a text—what evasion has not its favourite text?—"Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." They are prepared to fulfil their religious duties with decent regularity, to attend prayers, to listen to sermons, to signify their approval or disapproval of the preacher; but, having thus paid their homage to religion and given satisfaction to their conscience, they hold themselves free for the rest: they have

purchased immunity from interference in the gaieties of social life.

Nay, sirs, is not this temper the most complete vindication of the preacher when he ventures to handle such a subject? I cannot ignore the fact that the drama is, and always will be, an enormously powerful engine in the hands of society—an instrument of incalculable influence for evil or for good, as it is wrongly or rightly directed. Its popularity, its vividness, its directness of appeal to the imagination and the emotions, will inevitably secure to it this influence. And, if so, I cannot consent to turn my back upon it, or to close my eyes as if it were not. It is a matter of incalculable moment to yourselves and your children, to this your country, to the Gospel and the Church of Christ in this land, whether the English drama shall be suffered to sink to yet lower depths of degradation, or whether you will use all the influence which you possess, by abstention, by encouragement, by hearty sympathy with all its nobler efforts, by outspoken abhorrence of all its baser tricks, to raise it from its fallen estate, and to make it, what God would have it be, the purifier of the moral impulses, the quickener of the intellectual life, the common educator of the people in all that is heroic and truthful and just, and

unselfish and kindly-affectioned and pure and lovely and of good report.

For if any, despairing of the drama, should hold it the duty of a patriot and a Christian to crush it, the thing cannot be done; and, even if it were possible, the history of the past does not encourage us to hope that any good would result from this repressive policy, successfully pursued.

1. For first of all; dramatic representation is natural to man. Watch your own children, when they are left to themselves, and you cannot fail to be struck with this fact. The child rehearses in the nursery the scenes which it has witnessed in the drawing-room, or has read of in the story-book. It has no instruction, it receives no encouragement, in its childish attempt at dramatic action; but scenic imitation is a sort of instinct, which it gratifies as a matter of course. It is the same with the infancy of peoples, as with the infancy of individuals. Among the most barbarous tribes, wholly removed from the influences of civilization and culture, the drama in some rude form has been found to exist as a spontaneous outgrowth of the soil. What again is the painting, or the oratorio, but another mode of gratifying this perfectly natural, perfectly human impulse,

which leads to the reproduction of the real or imaginary scenes of the past? And, if this impulse be, as it appears to be, natural to man, it is quite vain to attempt to crush it, because it is not uncommonly degraded and abused. What abuse is more common or more fatal than the abuse of that natural emotion which we call love? The corruption of the best is always the worst. "If the light that is within thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" But the preacher and the moralist do not therefore attempt to repress the natural affections—what folly could be greater than this—but to guide, to cultivate, to ennoble, to chasten and purify them.

2. But again; this policy of repression has been tried at one period of our national life, and never was its futility more signally shown than in the issue. During the Commonwealth the drama was sternly proscribed, and with what results let the history of the English stage at the Restoration declare. The pent-up passions of a coerced but not convinced people burst out in the most fearful excesses, as soon as the restraint was removed. The drama of the Restoration is the foulest blot on our national literature, for which, as Englishmen, we may well hang our heads in shame, and of which, as Christians, we

hardly dare venture to speak. The grossest licentiousness was paraded on the stage. Virtue was derided by all the artifices of an ignoble ridicule, and vice recommended by all the attractions of a corrupt invention. The unclean spirit returning had found the house empty, swept, and garnished, and had entered in, taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself. So disastrous was the issue of this ill-judged attempt at proscription. As our brilliant historian and essayist has only too truly described it, "A frightful peal of blasphemy and ribaldry proclaimed that the short-sighted policy which aimed at making a nation of saints had made a nation of scoffers."

3. Once more ; even if history had not taught us that the attempt to crush the drama is attended with far greater evils than those which it is designed to remove, would it be altogether wise to resort to such extreme measures, and thus to cut ourselves off from a powerful instrument of education, without at least making the attempt to direct it and to use it for good ? The drama was in times past the great teacher of the people, sharpening and refining their intellectual faculties, and setting before them a lofty standard of domestic and political morality. Why should it not be so now ? The ancient

stage in its purest ages was the pulpit—not only in name but in teaching. In the Athenian theatre tragedy in sceptered pall preached the noblest sermons which the poet could conceive or the age comprehend. And have we not ourselves seen of late how, in a remote village of the Bavarian highlands, the most terrible tragedy in the history of our race, represented on a rustic stage by a simple peasantry, could rivet thousands of spectators during the long hours of a summer's day, subduing the most frivolous into silent awe, and thrilling all alike with a more profound sense of the power and significance of that unique act of self-sacrifice—the most solemn, most pathetic, most vivid, most effective of all sermons? I am far from wishing to see the religious drama introduced again into this country. Only as a directly devotional service is it at all tolerable. Even then the scenic representation of the Passion may be a questionable mode of teaching. But profaned by the touch of gain or the vanity of display, it is transmuted at once into the rankest of all blasphemies. I only mention the fact, as illustrating the capabilities of the drama for the highest purposes of instruction. But what is there to prevent the English stage from taking its proper place as the most useful ally of the

school and the pulpit by promoting all that is healthiest in morality, and all that is most bracing to the intellect?

It is not without shame that as Christians we read a definition of the drama given by a heathen philosopher more than three centuries before Christ. He tells us that the aim of tragedy is the *purification* of the emotions of awe and pity in the audience through their sympathy with the action of the drama. To purify, and not to stimulate at any cost—this, according to Aristotle, is the proper function of scenic representation. I desire no other definition. I make no larger demand. Let it be the aim of the tragic poet to purify one set of emotions, such as anger, fear, pity, by kindred representations of pathos and suffering; of the comic poet to purify another set—love, mirth, geniality and the like—by kindliness, by humour, if need be, by satire and by ridicule, but at all events to *purify*. This was the tendency of the English stage in the age of its greatest triumphs and in the person of its noblest dramatists, despite occasional coarsenesses of expression, the more to be deplored as blots on a fair picture. But can this definition be applied with any truth to the recent drama of this country? I am glad to think that there are some noble exceptions, of which this

may indeed be said. All honour to those dramatic writers and those stage managers who have disdained to court popularity by flattering a vicious public taste. But as a rule, is purification either the aim or the tendency of the English stage at this moment? If so, how comes it that the clergyman is almost barred entrance into a theatre by general consent, and even worldly men would sneer if he should appear frequently within its walls? How comes it that the plots and the dialogue of pieces which are witnessed without a blush by thousands cannot be alluded to in the family circle, except under the disguise of some delicate euphemism or some carefully guarded periphrasis?

Test the present tendency of the theatre by this standard, and what results will the examination yield? Shall we say that it enlists all the activities of the mind and all the sympathies of the heart on the side of purity and honour and virtue? Shall we say that it shows a scrupulous respect for the chastity of growing youth and the fidelity of wedded life, holding up every violation of the one and every breach of the other to scorn, as mean and degrading; that it carefully abstains from inflaming any corrupt passion by a gesture or a look or a word suggestive of evil; that it is scrupulously modest in its

appointments, its dresses, its movements; that its mirth and its repartee are not barbed with any taint of poison which will rankle and fester in the imagination; and that thus, while it attracts and amuses, it also chastens and elevates, doing its noble work all the more effectually because it teaches without seeming to teach, because it demands no effort, which is not also a delight, in the spectators?

Are these its moral effects? And do its intellectual influences correspond to these? Does it give a healthy tone to the mental faculties? Does it abhor all mean artifices, and aim at producing its effects by imagination, by humour, by careful construction of plots, by truthful delineation of character? Does it avoid mere sensationalism, striking right home to the mind, rather than dazzling the eye and fascinating the ear? Does it eschew mere burlesque, scorning to purchase an easy popularity by caricaturing any illustrious name or any important movement or any great work of genius, and thus by a false association of ideas debasing and vitiating the public taste? For what are sensationalism and burlesque but different kinds of mental intoxication, producing a delirious sense of excitement for the moment, but ending in the degradation and wreck of the faculties, where each fresh gratifi-

education begets a fresh craving, till the intellectual constitution is shattered by excessive indulgence in stimulants?

And we have had our warning. If we sin again, we shall sin with our eyes open. The history of English literature is our monitor, and the voice speaks with no faint or stammering utterance. I have already alluded to the drama of the Restoration as the deepest stain on the pages of our national history. I might quote paragraph after paragraph from one who was no unfriendly critic of dramatic literature and had no puritanical leanings, in which he paints in ever-darkening colours the profaneness and immorality of the English stage at this period; when "the common characteristic was hard-hearted, shameless, swaggering licentiousness, at once inelegant and inhuman," when "nothing could be so pure or so heroic, but that it became foul and ignoble by transfusion through those foul and ignoble minds," when "the comic poet was the mouthpiece of the most deeply corrupted part of a corrupted society." These sentences of indignant scorn—and they are not the strongest—were penned, be it observed, not by some fanatical preacher of the age, but by a cultivated man of literature in our own generation, jealous for his country's honour and blushing for his

country's shame. Then it was, that one man stepped forward to denounce the shameless scandal. It might have seemed that a clerical outlaw, like Jeremy Collier, aiming his blows at his own political friends, would prove only a sorry champion of such a desperate cause against all the genius and fashion and power of the age. But there is a majesty in purity and honour, before which baseness recoils overawed. The smooth pebble from the brook, slung with fearless hand, smote the great intellectual giant of the age in the brow; and the "towering crest of Dryden" fell before his dauntless assailant. Dryden, a chief offender, retracted. "In many things," he wrote, "he has taxed me justly and I have pleaded guilty." Dryden retracted; and his retraction stands recorded as a warning to all future times. But no retraction can unprint the printed page; no retraction can wipe out the stain on our literature; no retraction can arrest the spread of the poison through the veins of generations yet unborn.

But we have not fallen so low as this. The profligacy and profaneness, the shameless parade of vice, which disgraced the drama of that ill-starred period, would be revolting to our good taste now. We need not fear any recurrence to such a state of things. Yes; there is perhaps

little likelihood of a return to the coarseness of the past. But may not a still greater peril to the morals of England lurk under the insidious refinement which disguises its corrupt tendencies in graceful images, which trades on the fact that our noblest impulses lie very close to our basest passions, and thus leads astray by working on the amiable sensibilities of the heart? Mere coarseness carries with it its own antidote, for it repels all but vulgar and debased natures by its loathsomeness. It is the fatal association that blends the good with the evil, that makes vice palatable by culture and refinement, from which we have most to dread.

We have not fallen so low yet. Thank God, it is true. But in what direction are we moving? This is the really momentous question. Are we on an incline. For, if so, unless we arrest ourselves at once by a stern effort, then by an inevitable law of forces moral as well as physical, the descent will be accelerated, and the precipitation must come at last. I wish I could think it possible to answer this question in more than one way. But can any man who calmly reviews the last quarter of a century doubt that during this period a poisonous taint has been spreading through literature and society? The infection may have been communicated in the first instance

from abroad; but it is naturalized, or almost naturalized, among us now. The degradation of the stage is only one token of a much more general corruption. The popular literature—the novels and poetry—the newspaper reports, even the shop-windows, tell the same tale. Subjects are discussed, and sights are exhibited, which would not have been tolerated a few years ago. And we, as patriots, look idly on, discussing the material defences of our country, as though no moral danger threatened her integrity; we, as Christians, fold our arms, as though we should never be called to account for any of these things, as though it were a light matter in ourselves or others to abuse the faculties and the senses which God has given us, forgetting the responsibility inculcated in the wise man's saying, "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."

And yet what interests should appear more momentous either to the patriot or to the Christian than the purity of his country's literature? A bad law may be rescinded; a vicious institution may be abolished; but a corrupt work of genius is there, there for ever. Can there be any lesson more grave or more deeply pathetic than the confession of that epilogue in which the father of English poetry, at the close of his life, glancing

back on the creations of his literary genius, retracts all that is tainted with grossness and levity, avowing his contrition and asking forgiveness through the mercy of Christ? And again; will not all right-minded men echo the tribute of respect which our great living poet has paid to his great predecessor, and thankfully acknowledge that the laureate wreath did indeed descend upon him greener from the brows of one who uttered nothing base? Who does not regret, even in Shakspeare, the occasional coarseness, possibly not his own, which blots the pages of dramas otherwise essentially pure and healthy and noble in their moral tone?

For indeed the responsibilities of literary genius are enormous, as the consequences are incalculable. Can any anguish be imagined more bitter to the awakened conscience of a penitent than the memory of some one human soul polluted, degraded, ruined by his means? To such a one any accumulation of suffering will seem a small price to pay for redeeming the past, if only he could bear all the burden himself, if only the past were not irredeemable. Such remorse might well drag down a spirit from on high. And yet what is one isolated case of degradation through personal companionship, compared with the noxious influence of a perverted literary

genius, which pervades all classes and extends to all time? Who is so hardened that he would dare to face such a retrospect, if only for a moment he were gifted with a seraph's vision, and could see spread out before him the infinite, intricate consequences of his work in all their manifold and hideous forms? Who would not hold it better far to have lived obscure and died forgotten, than thus to have laid a whole world at his feet, dazzled with the brilliancy of his genius, and then, when the intoxication of popularity has passed away, then, when it is too late, to awaken to the awful reality?

But, if the purity of our literature is threatened, the fault cannot be all on one side. There is a law of supply and demand in literature as well as in commerce. A corrupt drama is the reflection of a corrupt age. The author gives what the audience requires. Each acts and reacts upon the other, either debasing or elevating, as the tendency may be. The remedy therefore is in the hands of the people of England, more especially of the influential and cultivated classes of England.

This fact it is which makes it worth while for a preacher to dwell on this subject at all. Not a few members of this congregation have very distinct and very grave responsibilities in this

matter. To such I earnestly appeal, by their example and their influence, by tacit discouragement and by outspoken reproof, by all lawful means direct and indirect, to stem this advancing tide of immorality; to set their faces sternly against the insidious attractions of a refined sensualism; to accept no compromise which condones the corrupt or mean sentiment for its sparkling wit or its graceful expression; to promote a taste for all that is high and noble and lovely in the creations of past genius; to encourage whatever is pure and healthy in the literary efforts of their own generation. This let them do, assured that the layman who will boldly take up this position before the world is the truest benefactor to his country and the most effective preacher of Christ. This let them do, remembering that all those elements in our nature which are so powerfully affected by dramatic representation for good or for evil, are God's talent given to us in trust—our imagination, our affections, our emotions, our sensibilities, our senses; "The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them."

MUSIC.

“Lamech took unto him two wives: the name of the one was Adah, and the name of the other Zillah. And Adah bare Jabal: he was the father of such as dwell in tents, and of such as have cattle. And his brother's name was Jubal: he was the father of all such as handle the harp and organ. And Zillah, she also bare Tubal-cain, an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron.”—GEN. iv. 19—22.

“And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: and they sung as it were a new song before the throne.”—REV. xiv. 2, 3.

I do not know that it would be possible to find two subjects more different in their character than that which was discussed in this church last Sunday afternoon, and that which I have undertaken to discuss to-day. The preacher of last Sunday commenced his sermon with an eloquent apology for preaching upon his subject at all: he spoke of the drama, and no one could

be surprised that he thought it necessary to do so, as a thing which many persons would regard as worthy of reprobation rather than discussion; he considered that he might be blamed as wasting the precious moments which the preacher can claim for the publication of the Gospel of Jesus Christ upon a subject which might better deserve a few passing withering words of rebuke, than serious and dispassionate pondering. The preacher of to-day need not be troubled by any such fears, and need not trouble his hearers with any such apology. To speak of music is to speak of that of which Holy Scripture is full. I have given you a sample taken from each end of the book. To speak of music is to speak of that which accompanies and animates the Book of Common Prayer. To speak of music is to speak of that without which our public service would be intolerably cold and almost dead; nay, it is to speak of that which (as it would seem) is indispensable to the service of heaven itself, and which warms the devotions and interprets the feelings of saints and angels before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

Hence the question would rather seem to be what can be the *abuse*, than what is the proper *use* of music? and I might perhaps dis-

miss the subject at once with the comprehensive warning given by St. Paul to the Christians of Corinth, to use the things of this world without abusing them, knowing that "the fashion of this world passeth away." But I should very imperfectly perform the task which I have undertaken, if I dealt with it merely thus: all the pleasures of sense, all the pleasures of intellect, all the pursuits of science or literature or money-making or what not might be in a certain manner treated according to this universal formula: there is nothing except positive sin, of which you may not say that it *is* to be used and is *not* to be abused. What we want in the case of each thing of this world which is to pass away, is such an examination of its character, such a knowledge of its aims, its principles, its tendencies, as shall enable a conscientious Christian, who is jealous of the honour of God and careful concerning his own spiritual life, to judge how far and in what manner he may use the thing in question, and when and under what circumstances he is in danger of abusing it.

It is with this view of the task undertaken by me this afternoon, that I have chosen for a text two passages of Scripture taken respectively from the first and the last

book of the sacred volume. It has seemed to me that the thoughts concerning music suggested by these two passages in their relation and in their contrast might lead us, by God's help, towards the point which we desire to reach, and that the treatment of the subject would be more interesting if we followed the hints of Scripture concerning musical development, than if I endeavoured to conduct you to the same point by a road entirely of my own making.¹

¹ It is worthy of remark that music belongs to Scripture and the Church in a degree which cannot be asserted of any other art. Music rose to great dignity in the Jewish Church, as set forth in this sermon; thence (as may be safely assumed, if it cannot be strictly proved) it was adopted without effort into the Christian Church; and from the service of the Church it has gained that glorious secular development which constitutes the music of modern times and of Christian nations. My meaning will be seen more clearly by comparing music with poetry, sculpture, painting, the drama. In each and all of these we may speak of the Greeks as our masters; and there are several branches of art in which we are indebted not to the Greeks only, but to several other nations; but of music I believe the same thing cannot be asserted. There is no heathen nation, nor ever has been, which has had anything to teach us. I do not say that no heathen nation has had any music, which of course would not be true; but certainly music in its highest sense may be asserted to be the exclusive property of Christian civilization. This unique position of music I have not seen noticed, but it seems worthy of consideration.

I ask you then, before we go any farther, to contrast the two passages. They represent, if I may so speak, the *genesis* and the *apotheosis* of music. In the first we find music in immediate connexion with men who have just begun to live in tents and to keep cattle, associated, as we should say, with the earliest germs of civilization; associated, too, with the invention of metal-work—Jubal was the half-brother of Tubal-cain. We find music, in fact, in its earliest instrumental simplicity, but, like all great discoveries, put upon a footing never afterwards to be destroyed, not even by the deluge itself. This I call the *genesis* of music; and my passage from the Book of Revelation represents what I have ventured to call its *apotheosis*, its exaltation to heaven. There we find music before the throne of God, its humble origin lost, as it were, in its infinite glorification. That which began in tents has found its way into the heavenly courts; or perhaps it would be more philosophical to say, that the sounds of music on earth, whether uttered by human voice, or produced by human instrument, are shown to have been the earthly echoes of heavenly sounds, and music thus proved to be a gift of God, though it seemed to be the pure invention of the human mind. Is there not a mighty and wonderful interval between the

first and the last appearance of music upon the page of Scripture? It is an interval almost like that which separates man himself, as he appears at the beginning, and as he appears at the end of the book. When man first tuned his harp he was man in sin,—Jubal, in fact, as I shall observe more particularly presently, represents to us mankind emphatically on the sinful side,—but man, as we find him connected with music in the heavenly choir, is man redeemed, and not only so, but man purified and exalted—it is man in the white robes of holiness and of triumph—man associated with angels, and tuning his harp and singing his choral hymns in that land of rest, in which they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, and in which all tears are wiped away. Is it not a mighty and wonderful interval? Who would have thought when he read of Jubal being the father of those who handle the harp, that the instrument which he invented, and the science which is inseparable from it, would have been exalted, like fallen man himself, to heaven, and would have been recognized by St. John when heaven was opened to him in his apocalyptic trance?

Let us, however, note some of the steps of this interval: in other words, let us note, as we may, the progress of music from its humble

origin in my first text, to its heavenly perfection of growth in my second.

I say its *humble* origin, but in truth the word humble scarcely expresses the thought which is conveyed by the Bible record. It was observed by the preacher of the first of this course of sermons, that the invention of the arts of life is assigned in Scripture to the family of Cain, which represents the secular side of humanity, not to that of Seth, which represents the spiritual. The observation is an important one, and perhaps it may be added, that justice is frequently very imperfectly rendered to those to whom the Scripture describes mankind as being thus indebted. It would manifestly take me beyond my present subject to enter upon a discussion of the merits of the family of Cain; but certainly there must be some meaning in the fact of music being in its origin so emphatically secular; it would seem to indicate the general principle that the things of this world may be consecrated to God, and that an art is not the less noble, not the less capable of ministering to the spiritual wants of man, because it springs from an unpromising root. In fact, if the family of Cain represents to us the secular, and the family of Seth the spiritual, then we may say that it is the very business of Seth to ap-

propriate and turn to higher purposes the inventions and discoveries of Cain : poetry, music, art, the comforts and conveniences of life, must all be rescued from the domain of mere sensual enjoyment, and applied to the noblest purposes which the noblest mind can conceive.

Music, as it first comes in practice before us in Holy Scripture, has a thoroughly secular garb. “What hast thou done,” said Laban to Jacob,² “that thou hast stolen away unawares to me, and carried away my daughters, as captives taken with the sword? Wherefore didst thou flee away secretly, and steal away from me; and didst not tell me, that I might have sent thee away with mirth, and with songs, with tabret, and with harp?” A secular use this; but it is interesting to observe the recognition of music in its double form, vocal and instrumental, as an established institution; it is regarded as the natural outcoming of the feelings of the heart upon a festive occasion. What Laban said to Jacob nearly four thousand years ago might easily be said now.

I think we have no further reference to music in Holy Scripture, till we find it brought in to celebrate the triumph of Israel over Pharaoh after the passage of the Red Sea. “Then sang

² Gen. xxxi. 26, 27.

Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously : the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” “And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered them, Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously ; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.”³ Notice the progress since we heard Laban speaking to Jacob. As a matter of *art* we have now apparently solo and chorus, Miriam and the women answering one to the other; and if it be thought that the art had been brought to its present condition by the influence of Egyptian civilization,⁴ I do not object

³ Exod. xv. l. 20, 21.

⁴ It is obvious that the idolatry of the golden calf was an outcoming of Egyptian worship; and as the calf itself was Egyptian, so probably were the accompaniments—the singing and the dancing. There is no particular account of what took place. The only reference to music is in the words of Moses, “It is not the voice of them that shout for mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome; but the voice of them that *sing* do I hear” (Exod. xxxii. 18). I should suppose, however, that the singing was accompanied by instruments; the whole ceremony would probably be an imitation of the Egyptian worship of Apis. Dr. Burney observes that “the trumpet

to the conclusion: this is parallel to the adoption by Seth of the discoveries of Cain. But far beyond the mere question of art, notice the high purpose to which music is now devoted!

of the jubilee is ordered to be sounded so soon after the flight from Egypt, that it must have been an Egyptian instrument." He refers also to Clemens Alexandrinus as affirming that Moses was instructed in "arithmetic, geometry, rhythm, harmony, but above all, medicine and music." This may probably be true, but I doubt whether there was much of *music* in the trumpets of the jubilee; they, together with the trumpets of silver used for assembling the people, and the rams' horns used at the siege of Jericho, scarcely come under the description of musical instruments. At all events the use of them marks no progress in musical science. In referring to the music of Egypt, I may introduce here a quotation from Engel's "Music of the Most Ancient Nations:"—"It seems almost incredible, but it is nevertheless a fact, that in one of the famous sepulchres at Thebes an Egyptian harp was found, with catgut strings, which, when touched, still emitted sounds, though the instrument had been immured and mute probably about three thousand years." In the same work is to be found the following enumeration of musical instruments in use amongst the Hebrews (Engel suspects that there may have been others with which we are unacquainted):—1. The Harp. 2. The Dulcimer. 3. The Asor, or ten-stringed instrument, played with a plectrum. 4. The Lyre. 5. The Tamboura, or Guitar. 6. The Pipe. 7. The Double Pipe. 8. The Syrinx, or Pandean Pipe, probably the *ugab* or *organ* of the English version. 9. The Bagpipe. 10. The Trumpet. 11. The Drum. 12. The Timbrel or Tabret of the English version. 13. Cymbals. 14. Bells.

“Sing ye to the Lord!”—here is the first recorded consecration of song, and the timbrels and even the dances, are used for the purpose of impressing upon the hearts of the people a deep sense of the mighty things which the Lord God had done for them. The song of Miriam may be described as a primitive *Te Deum*.

I do not find, however, that music was at once distinctly adopted as an element of Divine service. Trumpets were used for assembling the people; trumpets were used at the siege of Jericho; but of music, as a part of Divine worship, we do not find any notice in the earliest times of the Jewish Church. A very remarkable point, however, is this, that as soon as we hear of the training of the prophets, we hear of music in connexion with them. “When thou art come to the city,” said Samuel to Saul, when he anointed him king, “thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a harp before them; and they shall prophesy.”^a It is clear that this musical accompaniment was not accidental: music was connected with prophecy; its sacred value may be said to have been established; even the direct divine afflatus did not

^a 1 Sam. x. 5.

entirely supersede the influence which music could produce upon the prophet's soul.

But the great step in the exaltation and application of music was that which was made by David. If we were speaking of that which was merely and simply human, we should say that it was his *genius* which put music upon that high ground which it has never since lost. Poet, composer, harper, he had all the gifts which were necessary for the introduction of a grand and permanent change; and there can be little doubt that through all the subsequent troubles of the Jewish Church, down to the very time of our Lord Himself, the music of the temple never lost the impulse which David originally impressed upon it; even banishment to Babylon could not destroy the work. The people "hung their harps" for a time "on the willows," and refused to "sing the Lord's songs in a strange land;" but when they came back again they brought their harps with them; and as soon as the temple was rebuilt they had their orderly choir and their instruments and psalms, according to their old tradition and practice; and, in fact, one of the most striking points in the history of the return from the captivity, is the importance of the position assigned to music.

And so music passes away from our notice in

the Old Testament history. You will observe what progress it has made. It began, at least in its instrumental form it began,—for perhaps vocal music was as natural to men as it is to the birds,—it began with Jubal when men first lived in tents; it concludes with the trained choir of the temple in Jerusalem. In the New Testament we hear the last echo of Jewish music, and a very touching and solemn echo it is, in the Passover hymn which we are told that our Lord and His disciples sang; and then with merely such incidental notices as that of the Apostle, who speaks of “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,” and the like, we miss music altogether till we come to the concluding book of Holy Scripture. Then it seems to break forth for the last time with more power than ever. Music seems as if it were beyond everything else the occupation of heaven. St. John, who had often heard the Temple worship, and who had heard music also (as I should suppose) in the service of the Christian Church, found in heaven a service similar to that which he had heard on earth, but much more magnificent and more complete; it was, as I have said, the *apotheosis* of music; it was music exalted to the throne of God Himself, music crowned and glorified. We know, through the

genius of Handel, and through the application of vocal and instrumental skill, what can be done in the way of giving emphasis to such words as "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and we may well suppose that the highest feelings moved in our own hearts by listening to Handel's noble chorus fall short of those which St. John would experience when he heard those same words delivered by the mouths of that mighty multitude whom no man can number.

I have given this brief sketch of the development of music as it appears upon the page of Holy Scripture, partly because it is interesting to observe that it has a scriptural history; this very fact is sufficient to make it clear that music is a proper subject for treatment in the pulpit; but partly also because the scriptural history of music seems to teach us in the most forcible manner how music ought to be regarded and treated by wise and earnest minds. I have spoken of music as having a lowly origin; let it never be forgotten that its origin *is* lowly. The gift of music is not a purely intellectual gift; a very stupid man may be (in a certain sense) a very musical man; he may have in a high degree that peculiar endowment which we call *musical ear*; in fact the primary root of

music is sensuous, not intellectual; and that perhaps is why no one feels ashamed to confess that he does not understand music, or that he does not like it. And the effect produced by music is to a great extent a sensuous effect: when a child is hushed to sleep by the lullaby which its mother sings, I apprehend that it is through the senses that the calming effect is produced, almost as completely as the same effect is produced by rocking the cradle. So again, when martial music stirs the spirits of troops to the battle, the effect is through the senses, not through the reason; it is a musical intoxication. So again, if you watch, as I have sometimes done, the result produced by the humblest street music upon the humblest street children, and perceive how instinctively as the organ plays the little children dance, you will perceive the strength of the influence of musical sounds acting upon the senses. Nay, I have seen tears produced by music under circumstances which made it absolutely certain that the tears were the direct musical effect of the sounds, or at all events not the effect of any process of reasoning to which the sounds had given rise.⁶

⁶ Reference is made here to a personal experience which may perhaps be worth recording. Visiting the Reformatory School of Mettray, near Tours, some years ago, with some

I suppose that we should not be wrong in putting under this class the well-known story of home-sickness produced in the hearts of soldiers by hearing the music of their native land. If mere thought and melancholy brooding could have produced the result, it would have been produced without music; but these could not produce it; at all events, they did not act with overwhelming power; it was only when the thoughts of home were conveyed through the sensuous channel of the ear that the influence became irresistible and strong men sank beneath it.

I say this, of course, without the intention of representing music as *merely* sensuous; this it is not—this no one would venture to assert it to be. Regard music, for example, as the interpreter of *words*. Consider how language becomes, in many instances, so married to musical sounds that a separation seems impossible. What would the words of our national anthem be without their tune? Or, to take a higher example, consider how much is done to bring home the

friends, we were invited to listen to a wind-band, composed of boys of the school. We had heard much to move our feelings, but I suppose that not one of us had been moved to tears. When, however, the music began, I perceived that tears were running down my cheeks.

language of Holy Scripture to our hearts, and to interpret its meaning by the music which the genius of great composers has associated with the language ! Think of all the passages which have been thus interpreted in the " Messiah : " " Comfort ye, comfort ye My people ; " " Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a Son ; " " He was despised and rejected of men ; " and so on. Purcell, Handel, Mendelssohn, Wesley, Goss, and many others, may in fact be regarded as great interpreters and illustrators of Scripture. It would be difficult to assign to music higher praise than this. But looking at it apart from its power of interpretation, looking at musical composition merely as an art, we shall easily see how it rises above the region of the senses. I do not know why, regarding the matter from a merely intellectual point of view, the genius of Handel, or Haydn, or Beethoven, should not be regarded as being as great and as remarkable as that of Bacon, or Leibnitz, or Newton, just as the genius which produced the violin was lately asserted (as I believe truly) to be of the same order as that which produced the steam-engine.

But the true view, the safe view, of the subject, as it seems to me, and as my double text suggests, is that which regards at once the sensuous and the intellectual, or still more the

spiritual side of music. Students of natural history tell us of a tendency of creatures to *revert* to lower forms from which they have been raised by cultivation; and so there may be, perhaps, a tendency in music to *revert* to its lower forms. Certainly it may be depraved; certainly it may be made the stimulant of passions, and the accompaniment of low animal enjoyments, and the vehicle of lewd thoughts, and the enemy of the human soul! Just because its power over the feelings is so great, and because it can “dissolve us into ecstasies, and bring all heaven before our eyes,” therefore, also, it can effectually influence the soul for evil, and can be as powerful in scenes of revelry and debauchery on the side of Satan, as it is in the Church on the side of God. It is not, however, into this absolute degradation that we need follow music to-day: what we are concerned with is rather the treatment which it should receive in what is called *society*; the manner in which it may be used and abused by ordinary people in ordinary life. And the simplest and plainest, at the same time the truest remark that can be made upon the subject is this, that music, like everything else given to us by the good providence of God to be to us a source of recreation and delight, must be used with care and moderation. Excess in any pleasure is a sin, but

total abstinence is not of necessity a virtue; nor do I suppose that in the matter of music any considerable number of persons would counsel total abstinence. Few, however, will deny that the indulgence of musical appetite may be excessive; few will deny that as music may calm and comfort the mind, and even brace and strengthen it, so also it may have an opposite result, and may tend to dissipation and weakness.

All this is obvious enough, and it immediately follows that the Apostle's maxim is applicable to this as to other things, "Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." But I feel that there is a practical question to which any one preaching upon this subject ought to propose an answer, and the answer to which is not so obvious. I can quite understand a conscientious person, especially a young person, being troubled as regards the line of duty with respect to public musical entertainments. The question will press most forcibly when it is applied to that very high form of musical entertainment, the opera. Is the opera to be forbidden ground to one who wishes to lead a truly Christian life?

The answer to this question cannot, I think, be a simple *yes* or *no*. In the first place, it is not a purely musical question, but involves the

subject which was discussed last Sunday, the drama; and it may be urged that anything unsuitable for Christian eyes and Christian ears ought to be banished by public Christian opinion. If the entertainment be not pure, it ought to be purified; if the thing be not wrong in itself, then it is very doubtful whether it be a wise policy for good people to turn their backs upon it, instead of bringing their influence to bear upon it for good. Hence I dare not say that it appears to me to be a part of a Christian's duty to condemn entirely this kind of musical performance. If the arguments which were produced last Sunday be good with respect to the drama, they are good with respect to the drama in this its musical dress. In fact there is, I suppose, less danger of evil in the case of the musical drama than there is in the case of the drama in its more ordinary form. But I think that each person must judge for himself or herself what is the effect of indulgence in this musical delight. Does it, or does it not, injuriously affect your mind? Is it taking too great hold upon you, dissipating your thoughts, marring your prayers, interfering with your solemn duties? If it is doing this, if (in our Lord's phrase) "*it offends you,*" forms a stumbling-block in your way, if it stands between

your soul and God, then, though it be dear as a right hand or a right eye, cut it off and cast it from you!

The fact is, that the question of conduct in the matter of concerts, operas, and the like, is scarcely one of music, but one of danger of dissipation : and it cannot and must not be forgotten that there may be dissipation connected with going to church, with hearing of sermons, with taking part in high ceremonial worship, quite as real, perhaps quite as mischievous, as any connected with secular entertainments. I do not see how this danger is to be prevented; it is inherent in all the delights and joys which God has given us. Why should we not regard it as part of our intended education in this world, that we should use all these gifts of God without abusing them?

There is another department of music upon which it may be well to say a few words. Church music has lately made prodigious strides : most of us can remember the time when our parish churches had scarcely anything that could be called music at all, and the music of many cathedrals was a disgrace. Now the music of most churches is tolerable, in many it is admirable, in some the danger is rather of excess than of defect, and in a few an entire revolution

has been effected by the introduction into Divine service of such works as the "Passion Music" of Bach. Taking a general view I rejoice, as I think every one must, in the change which we have lived to see: but I confess to a persuasion that the musical movement in our churches requires care in order to make it safe. In music you do, as I have endeavoured to impress upon you, appeal to the senses, and the senses are somewhat like fire, very excellent as servants and very dangerous as masters. Music is an admirable aid to devotion, but it may attain too rank a growth, and so smother and choke devotion. I have regarded with much interest the accounts of the late remarkable efforts in the direction to which I alluded just now. The result appears to have been all that could be desired. There has been apparently reverence, devotion, solemnity. I am not speaking, therefore, as one who finds fault; but knowing the intensity of the pleasure which I should myself derive from such a performance of the most solemn music, under circumstances of such exceptional solemnity, I should feel afraid of being misled as to my motive, and I should feel driven to ask myself with some anxiety, "Is this pleasure?" or "Is it prayer?"

Yes, this is just the difficulty which we have

in turning God's great gift of music to the highest purposes. Undoubtedly music is then applied to its highest purpose, when it is consecrated to Him; but it is difficult to offer a perfect sacrifice. As lovers of music, we are (so to speak) the children of Jubal, and the blood which ran in his veins runs in ours, and there is danger of being tempted to evil by that which seems to be, and indeed is, very good. Nevertheless, it is well for us to recognize and feel how great and true a gift music is. It is well that we should have high and dignified thoughts as to its purposes and its capabilities. It is well for us to observe, that while it contributes more than any other art to the solace and pleasure of mankind, it is consecrated more universally than any other to the service of God, and is honoured by being represented in Scripture as the vehicle of worship in heaven.

This, indeed, is the crown of music. I know not in what manner the experience of St. John will be found to be a true experience by ourselves when we appear before the throne of God. All that we read of his experience, whether in sight or sound, can only be an adapted presentation of the reality in a form which flesh and blood can apprehend; but certainly it tends to raise our thoughts to the highest pitch concerning

the use of music, and to make us dread its abuse as a deed of utter shame, to remember that the eternal worship of God is presented to our minds as a concert of musical praise. I can conceive of no higher argument to Christian minds in favour of a wise and respectful use of music than this, and therefore I leave it with you in all its simplicity and all its grandeur; and I beseech you, as Christians, so to govern and guide your lives, so to educate your tastes and restrain your appetites, so to use the things of this world without abusing them, that you may be found worthy to take part in that eternal hymn of praise which constitutes the joy of heaven!

THE ADORNMENTS OF LIFE.

“ And as some spake of the temple, how it was adorned with goodly stones and gifts, He said, As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”—LUKE xxi. 5, 6.

ST. LUKE was not an eye-witness of this scene, but his cultivated sense of the picturesque enabled him easily to recall the points, and fix the fugitive passages of light and shade, in this last lingering of Christ about the temple walls. For more than twelve hours, from early morning when He passed the withered fig-tree, with its showy dress of leaves hanging dry and dead about the fruitless stem,—all this agonizing day, Jesus had been striving with priests and people, rectifying their mistakes, rebuking their abuse even of the religious life they loved with so fond a prejudice. At length, contending with them no more, He paused to rest: and it was opposite

to the treasury He found a seat, where those who came and went made their accustomed offerings.

He marked the Pharisees with their broad phylacteries, the priests with their long robes, the Sadducees with their jewelled fingers lightly playing in a humour of dainty criticism with epigrams they had picked, as worth preserving out of the sermons and speeches and parables of the Preacher—men of culture no doubt, and not unnaturally offended by the monastic severity and uncompromising rigour of this new doctrine—and marvelling at the hardihood of One who should presume to guide the thought of Jewish society, while He surrounded Himself with scholars, who, if they opened their lips to repeat His teaching, were sure to discover their rustic idioms and Galilean rudeness, for their speech betrayed them.

And there, as He sat on, He beheld the daughters of Jerusalem. He observed their devotions, and their fashions—the simple and affected mingled together, the plainest and loveliest, the immodest and pure, the ambitious and homely, the lady of Jerusalem and villager from Hebron, the happy girl subdued to silence and loving to walk alone, lest a breath should disperse the fragrance of her prayer, and the woman

past her season of beauty, who, failing to win by grace, forces her way by wit, and emulates the caustic speech of men. All these He saw—and the sun was going down upon their day! And then He thought of His own mother, and her early home at Nazareth, calm and clear as morning light, and the evenings that He had rested on the workman's bench, feasting His young eyes on her perfect adornment of the life of womanhood, and with the pride and honour of a son joying to think, that beauty like hers is indeed a joy for ever.

By-and-by came the rich men casting in their gifts, and then a poor widow offering her two mites, and He lifted up His voice, and said (in contradiction of what would be the opinion of the world), "Of a truth, I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all."

Something in His words or look, a deepening shadow on His brow, as He turned again towards the temple now fast emptying of its worshippers, made His disciples start, and interrupt Him with a deprecation of the ruin His looks foreboded. They pointed out the stones of the temple, their vastness, the art by which they had been wrought, their preciousness and beauty; nay, they commended them to His regard as

being religious offerings. "Do His words," they inquire, "portend that all these works of art, and gifts, all these ornaments of the church, shall be destroyed?" He answers them sternly and absolutely, in the briefest words, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be cast down."

And a little after, on His homeward path to Bethany, He sat down on the bank of the Mount of Olives, facing Moriah, the setting sun casting a golden glory upon the plated roofs and marble bulwarks of Herod's temple: and His disciples asked Him again about those goodly ornaments. In that hour, while He answered them, He reviewed in His mind the whole range of men's engagements with the world; and this, remember, in an hour of calm solemnity, at the close of the last undisturbed day which He ever lived on earth: "As for these things which ye behold, there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be cast down."

I. Remembering these words, I speak, as I am invited, to a Christian congregation, on the Adornments of life. This term may include the mightiest sculpture of Michael Angelo, and the purest Paradise of Fra Angelico, as well as the newest poem that lies on your table, and

the last colour that you have transferred to your dress, or the freshest flower that is plucked from your cultured garden, or the first May-blossom which reminds you what spring is doing in your absence for the decoration of the fields around your village church.

In touching this subject I dare not think how I should regard it, until I have brought it to the touchstone of the mind of Christ. I ask you, then, does our blessed Lord, in His life and person, encourage us in the enjoyment of the adornments which are among the finest luxuries of life? I believe, that so far from His example being a sanction to such enjoyment, it is more near the truth to say, that His whole life on earth was a protest against it. As the life of St. John Baptist is called a sermon on penitence, so may the life of Jesus be read as a sermon on abstinence.

True, the mention of the Baptist will remind you of a characteristic saying of our Blessed Lord, which on its first hearing contradicts my statement.¹ Obviously this represents a social

¹ "John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."—LUKE vii. 33, 34.

aspect of the character of Christ, a sympathy with such festive scenes, as demand the grace of art and ornament, else they are unredeemed from a vulgar satiety of the meanest appetite, and the baser materialism of wealth. Let us make the most of this sanction of social living : and then what does it come to ? Not to much more than such a contact with the world, as was a necessity to One who was founding a society to regenerate that world. Read alongside the context of His life, it implies no more alliance with the adornments of the natural life, than the presence of a bereaved mother at the bridal of a younger child, when she suffers the spray of orange flower to be pinned upon her breast ; no more than the circlet of diamonds upon the brow of a widowed Queen, still shaded by a faithful sorrow, while she holds her court. And again, if you add to this comparison of His own career with the desert life of the Baptist such incidents as the marriage feast at Cana, His multiplying the wine with so prodigal a grace as to provoke the mockery of the purist, His acceptance of the gifts of gold and frankincense from the hands of kings, whom the pencil of tradition has portrayed as dignified with the stately splendour and embellished with the curious draperies of the East, and (what at first sight looks a still

more startling exception to His severity) His receiving on His own Body the sweet-smelling ointment from the hands of the Magdalene, and a second time from another Mary a very costly gift of spikenard in deliberate preference to its being expended in charity on the poor—what now have you gained by way of proof, that His life was not a protest against even a temperate habit of enjoying the adornments of life?

I am not, at the present moment, contending for any inference from the facts of the life of Christ, but for the *facts* themselves. Can it be denied that He lived without the indulgence of taste or sense in the finer luxuries and ornaments of earth? The wealth of art and decorations of nature, He passed by them morning and evening without so much as breaking His ascetic fast!

If you doubt it, I ask you whether an artist, who searched the life of Jesus for evidences of an intelligent and appreciative sympathy with forms of beauty for beauty's sake, independent of their moral teaching, would not return offended, having verified by tests the prophet's report, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him"? The artist

would find in others, in Dante for instance, a wondrous (may I without irreverence say an almost equal) severity, and an awful insight into mysteries of the unseen world likely to overshadow the curiosity for precious things of earth ; but withal a mind imbued with the finest love of art, and delighting to linger, for their beauty's sake, upon the myriad gems of nature's setting in earth and sky. Indeed so deep in the poet's memory did her beauties lie, that it seemed as if his voice could never pause but in the cadence of one note, nor his eye rest but upon one form of light. For example, you will remember how each book of his noble poem closes with the mention of the *Stars* !

But in the life of our Blessed Lord there is no indulgence of this imagination, no such luxury permitted to the eye. With the sensibility of a pure and perfect manhood, there is a complete emptying out of the natural capacity for enjoyment. As He chose to die, thus He chose to abstain. "No man taketh it from Me;" thus He spake of the possession of life. And of His abstinence from the love of physical beauty He would have said the same ; "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."

It is not unlikely that you will resent this version of the mind of your Blessed Lord : and

there will recur to you many traits of His quick and tender memory of natural scenes. The lilies, the fields white for harvest, the fig-tree bursting in the spring, the ruddy sky, the vine, the shepherd leading out his flock, the music of children's voices, the palm-branches, the best robe fetched out for the prodigal's return, the ring, His own raiment, when He was transfigured, white as snow and glistening with light,—these will recur to you at once. But what I contend for is, that there is no *lingering of the senses* to enjoy these precious things, none of that leisurely delight in gazing upon the picturesque, which is inseparable from our modern taste, and without the intensity of which feeling no one would pass among us for an artist or poet worth the name. There is not in His history so much relaxation as would answer to our evening stroll in a simple garden, or the briefest holiday, when men travel to get new sensations from the sight of a snowy mountain. Jesus would do no more than touch these things with a flying finger, and then only to point a heavenly truth. He “drank of the brook in the way,” and passed onward on His mission, as the disciples plucked the ears of corn and ate them, without resting, as they walked.

Besides, if you would duly estimate the facts

as they bear upon our subject, you must give greater weight than is usually given to Christ's deliberate choice of a lot of poverty; for instance, His preference of an unlettered village in Galilee to the society of Jerusalem—His brief acquaintance with a cultivated inquirer like Nicodemus, and His three years' fellowship with fishermen and a tax-gatherer—His comparatively slight association with a scholar and artist like St. Luke, and His closer intercourse with Simon Zelotes, one of a turbulent band of political assassins, whom He selected to be one of the twelve. And, coming down from mental luxuries to the material furniture and ways and means of life, you will remember that for thirty years He dwelt in the carpenter's village home, and for three years was homeless, a passing guest in a fisher's hut, or in a lowly household, where all the service that was done Him fell upon the sisters of His host. Truly "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." I need not multiply evidences on this point to prove that our Blessed Lord chose a rudeness and poverty much beyond a mere frugality of living.

Admitting the facts, I can suppose one or other such inferences being drawn from them as these, viz.

a. That Christ having in His own person sternly protested against even the most refined luxuries of earth, it follows, that for us also "there is death in the pot;" and Christians, if they be disciples of Christ, must renounce them all as being part and parcel of that world which is at enmity with God.

b. Or, that Christ chose this privation as a portion of the atoning sufferings He undertook; that it was inseparable from Him as the Sin-bearer, being one expression of that life of penitence and exceeding sorrow, which, according to a well-known tradition, constrained Him never to smile; but that a similar rule of abstinence no more befits us than a perpetual restraint from smiles.

c. Or it might be argued, and with far greater reason, that Christ having redeemed not ourselves only but all creation from the curse, God's gifts are henceforth recovered to our use without doubtfulness and fear; that it is part of our Christian liberty to enjoy, not only the necessities but the ornaments of earth; that "every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

Now, none of these conclusions, not even the

last, commend themselves to my mind as satisfactory. They may be let pass as *views* ; but I doubt if the function of the preacher be to furnish to Christian people views, especially if his subject be not speculative, but eminently practical, as the one before us to-day. I know not, if in your judgment it is aiming high or aiming low, but I purpose, please God, to help those, who cannot be happy till their whole life is brought into unison with the mind of Christ, to pass from home to church, and from church to home, from the Lenten fast to the Easter feast, from their early Communion to their breakfast table, from their visits to the poor to their visits to the rich, with a soul "true to the kindred points of heaven and home." What we want is a real liberty and a thorough unity of life ; no sudden breaks in the passage from our secular to our religious work ; no jarring and perilous change from the broad gauge of home to the narrow gauge of church.

Now, the facts of human life being what they are, a partial and exaggerated statement would only provoke your contradiction ; and the preacher, who thus spoke to you, would seem "as one that beateth the air." I postpone, therefore, my own inference from the fact of the ascetic severity of our Blessed Lord, until I

shall have examined some arguments on the other side.

II. In opening the Bible we are confronted with this fact, that the religion of Jesus is a Catholic religion for the world. In the Church "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female." There is room in it for every faculty and form of mental power, nay, for every variety of taste. The unlettered is won by the simplicity of the Gospel: its difficulties are to exercise the energies of the student. The domestic and the heroic life, Telemachus and Ulysses, are to find in the Church a common sphere. She is like her cradle in Palestine, a narrow strip of land lying a little off the great thoroughfares of the world, apparently secluded by mountain and wilderness and sea, but really a frontier coast between East and West, a highway for armies from Rome to Asia, and for caravans from Damascus to Egypt, washed by the inland sea whose tideless waters cool the burning atmosphere of Africa, and make more genial the temperature of Greece and Italy and Spain.

There is abundant internal evidence that the Church of Christ is created to be Catholic. The very images, by which she loves to express her ideas, prove her intention to win all people and

embrace all languages. Bread, water,* the vine, the shepherd, the bride, darkness and light, life and death, her doctrine also of love—there is no people that is alien to these !

It were plainly impossible to project such a religion into the world, and divorce it from all alliance with those refreshments of life which are wrought out by art, seeing how art runs through the whole texture of society. The character of our religion is not prohibitive, but attractive. It is bold and fearless in embracing every created thing to a degree only possible to a divine confidence in its inherent purity. Even the censers of heretics it will save out of the flame, and reconsecrate the gold, and lay it in plates upon the altar of its sanctuary. In its exodus from bondage and in the vindication of its liberty it will spoil the Egyptians, and go forth the richer on its new career. May it not be said, that Christ by His Incarnation did for human life what in His first and typical miracle He did at the marriage feast? He took the vessels of stone, as He found them ready to hand in the Jewish ritual, and the water fresh from nature's spring, and by the power of a Divine Art changed the natural element into costly wine. Christ's religion was not for the desert but the town. People did not come to Him in

the wilderness to be taught, but He went to them in their homes, their synagogues, and their temple-feasts.

Again, we must give full weight to the indication of Christ's mind in the figures and parables which He used. Not only were they literary adornments of His discourse, but seals of favour, which He graciously set upon the innocent beauty of the objects He so transferred. The merchant seeking goodly pearls, the pearl of great price, the glory of Solomon, the lilies of the field, and the multitude of other natural objects which He noted, must not be forgotten in our attempt to ascertain His course of thought.

Also I am disposed to lay great stress on the *artistic* composition of Holy Scripture. Granted that it is simple, so much the more perfect is the art! Where shall you find in the whole range of literature a finer illustration of the "*ars celare artem*" than the Holy Gospel of St. John? Take the parable of the Good Shepherd in the tenth chapter, or the narrative of the miracle wrought on the man blind from his birth in the ninth chapter. Observe its lingering on minute details without weariness, its modulations of key without abruptness, its iteration of one theme without monotony, the

delicate contrasts, the points without hardness of outline, the harmony of colouring, and all so subdued and chaste without being pale, and the graceful play of light and shade—why it is like a page of Mozart!

Do you say that the power of St. John's Gospel lies in the mighty doctrine, the sublime simplicity of elemental truth, the eagle-eyed vision of the central life of the Son of God? Yes, but you shall not exclude the graces of its diction, the musical cadence of its prayers, the majestic measure of its creeds, the tender rhythm of its complaints, the dramatic energy of its wrath.

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world.”

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.”

“Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?”

Judas “having received the sop, went immediately out, and it was night.”

Tell me, where there is a book in the whole world so evidently intended for all people and

all generations as this Gospel of St. John, so free from local and temporary accidents, and yet so graphic in the individuality of the persons it describes ! Let the critics, who would tear the fourth Gospel from the hands of the Church, tell us where such another book may be found, albeit they would cast into the flames the page that reveals the Son of God, because every word in it stabs their heart of unbelief, and damns the lying vanities of their philosophy ! This fourth Gospel, so reviled by the enemies of the faith, so loved by the Church, is a consummate work of art : and due credence must be given to the fact, that Christ ordained His most precious words, His holiest and most secret utterances to the Father, to be enshrined in a form of beauty, which exquisitely adorns the doctrine He would have men learn.

Add to this Gospel the collection of Psalms, which there are proofs that Jesus loved, as all His saints have loved them since ; and the Book of Job, and the Song of Solomon, works of art, which have had their special charm for minds so cultivated as St. Augustine, St. Gregory, and St. Bernard ; and, as works of art, would not these three books be found everywhere in the homes of men of letters and good taste among the genuine adornments of life ?

Brethren, it is not too much to say that no sacred composition (I care not how holy the inspiration of its thought may be) will maintain an abiding influence upon the memory and imagination of men, unless it be a work of art! And when men talk—forgive me—the nonsense that is popular about the Church’s ritual, I venture to say, that there can be no assembling of ourselves together for common worship without ritual, and no ritual without art—bad art or good art as the case may be—a contingency incident to public galleries and the mansions of the rich and the homes of the simple, as well as to parish churches—but art and adornment of some sort of necessity there must be!

I do not wonder then, that a lover of art should describe that sentiment as “a false Puritanism which consists in a dread or disdain of beauty.” Why, the frostwork on the window-pane of the saddest house of mourning, the snow-wreaths hanging from the barest stem that marks the home of haggard poverty, the rain-cloud dropping gems upon the driest dust, the scarlet fungus and the slender fern which decorate the darkest corner of a sunless ruin, these adornments rebuke that Puritanism (if Puritanism it be) which is as false to nature as to nature’s God! And, again, when you lift

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your thoughts to the revelation of the life of man as it is to be, the perfect beauty of the Church of the redeemed ("Upon Thy right hand did stand the Queen in a vesture of gold, wrought about with divers colours—her clothing is of wrought gold, she shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework") and the vision of Heaven in the Apocalypse; you have overwhelming evidence that the mind of God has not disallowed a reverent love for the ornaments of nature and of art.

III. But what is the conclusion of the whole matter? Shall we enjoy these precious gifts of beauty freely and fearlessly, because they are inseparable from the world in which by the love of God we are born? Or shall we outright protest against them, and reject them from our personal life as did our Lord Jesus Christ? Or is there a wiser and a truer course?

I suppose the majority will say, "Use, but do not abuse; enjoy, but temperately, and you will be safe." Safe! And do you say, I shall be like Christ? For not to be Christ-like is to many souls not to be safe. Consider what men mean by a *temperate* use. Some mean by it a use short of excess. As one will say, "I smoke, or I take wine, but temperately," when habit has made that degree

of enjoyment, as he thinks, a necessity, a practice which he cannot give up. Is this temperance? It is being anchored to a habit, though the anchor that holds him is a small one. So persons will call it a temperate use of life's adornments when they only follow and keep somewhat within the traditions of the home into which they have been born, or the fashion of the day, or the proportion of their wealth. They habituate themselves to this amount of enjoyment, and, so long as it does not exceed it, they call it temperance, even while this habit has dominion over them, retiring it may be from what they call the world, and

“Nursing in some delicious solitude
Their slothful loves and dainty sympathies.”

I ask you, is this the use of these things which will satisfy Christ's disciples? I think not. It appears to me that such a form of temperance is based upon an ignorance of the mind of Christ. Would a temperate Jew or temperate Pagan do less righteously than this? Dare we, who have been baptized into the death of Jesus, live in these matters as if Jesus had not lived amongst them, nor said “yea” or “nay” about them?

Again, there are persons who think they take the sting of worldliness from these luxuries if

they dedicate a corresponding portion of their wealth and taste to objects reserved for God—to building and restoring churches for instance, or to munificent charities on the poor. Well, in the first place, it is very doubtful whether, in comparison with their houses of cedar, the largest givers to churches do not leave the ark of God to dwell within curtains. A gift of twenty thousand pounds looks a large sum on paper for building a church or endowing a colonial bishopric, but twenty thousand pounds is not half so large in a deed of conveyance or a builder's contract for a house.

But let a man give to the Church in full proportion to his wealth; nay, let him return to the pagan standard of patriotism in the republic of ancient Rome—

“Privatus illis census erat brevis,
Commune magnum;”

let him reserve to himself only a small portion, far less than a temperate enjoyment of these adornments, yet what has he gained? It is not at all sure that he is nearer the mind of Christ. Giving up all but one thing is giving nothing, if we have not achieved the liberty of will to say of that *one* which remains, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take

it again." Remember, those goodly stones and costly adornments on Mount Moriah were built into the temple, and were offerings dedicated to God; but you know their doom! That expenditure on the house of prayer was compatible with a rejection of the love of Christ. So also among ourselves, though few of us have facilities for building churches, yet we have equal opportunities for self-deceit. For instance, a young man being used to a home delicately furnished for the pleasure of a fastidious taste, and feeling the dangerous infection of a life of affluence, invents a contrast and an antidote, gives up a portion of his Sunday to some rough parish in Bethnal Green, while his sister, in the same spirit, visits hospitals and does some menial service for the outcast and the poor. It is good; it may tend to sanctify the life at home; but it falls far short of the necessity of the case. A man cannot be safe in his affluence till through the pores of his whole being he has absorbed the life of Christ into his system. This is Christ's intention; this is man's capacity: "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you."

It is hard to utter the truth without appearing to exaggerate, but the fact of the Christian's life is this, that, be God's will concerning

society what it may, be the scope He allows to the material victories of war, the acquisitions of peace, the inventions of the brain, the wealth of trade, the creative power of art, as wide as it may, yet every individual Christian man must bear in his personal life the marks of the Lord Jesus: the life that he now lives (mark you, not in the spirit only, not by-and-by in heaven, but now) in the flesh, he must live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved him and gave Himself for him. Yea, be he rich and have the means of educating his taste, or be he poor and have the taste only in its rudiments—be he well-born and inherit a capacity for true refinement, or be he raised to association with the refined by his own wealth or wit, I say, in either case, he must go forth from the bonds of habit, must carry out by his own will and deed, even to an extremity of self-sacrifice, the act which was done for him painlessly by the grace of God in baptism; he must *die* to the natural life, must do what his Lord did, with the contention and agony of the victim-spirit within Him; he must *empty himself*; and then, behold, the whole world is his, and all that is therein!

Brethren, this is Christian temperance, and there is none other worthy of the name. It is

a far, far higher grace than the moral virtue of using the world and not abusing it. It enables a man to walk through his galleries, and hold his court for men of art, with a soul set at liberty from doubtfulness and fear. Bearing in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, he trusts that the life also of Jesus will be made manifest in him, for long since he offered, not his gifts of goodly stones to the temple, but his own heart, emptied by his own will, to the living Christ. And henceforth, while he is dwelling in a house of silken draperies, and rarest porcelain, and classic sculpture, its walls a-glow with Venetian colour, and calmly beautiful with Tuscan forms, he will be in a triumphant sense the master of his treasures, through the power of a will that has done the one thing lacking: and thus having perfected himself by a spirit of poverty, and emptying himself of all, he has returned and followed Christ. Go back, therefore, to your homes, be they ever so slender in their outfit of luxury, or ever so sumptuous in wealth, or unique in art, and measure—not the material objects—but your own views of human life by the infallible measure of the Cross.

I do not bid you give up your treasures; that to many were a comparatively easy rule. I do not ask you to lay aside your pencil, as Fra

Bartolomeo did under the scourge of the fiery preaching of Savonarola, who, thinking reform was desperate, strove to shatter the palace of art that demoralized the Florence of the Medici; but I say, go back to your wardrobes, your jewel-boxes, your libraries, your Wedgewood vases and Chelsea dinner-service, your Turner drawings, your Reynoldses and your Gainsboroughs, and the thousand guinea portraits of your wife or child (I, for my part, think them well worth every guinea you choose to give, if they are indeed a work of art), and standing before them, or kneeling before the Crucified (that is a more likely attitude), inquire if you have emptied yourself indeed!

Oh, have you emptied yourself? have you renounced them, not with a reserve for a temperate use, but have you as good as lost them, and now count the loss as gain that you may win Christ and be found in Him? Could you do with them as Gideon's soldiers did with their pitchers of clay, break them for the sake of the light within? Are you ready so to deal with these earthen vessels that the treasure of a Christ-like poverty may be manifested in their midst? Have you the heart to do as the woman did, who with forethought had kept her devotion for her Lord, and when the opportunity was offered, *crushed*

the box in her hands that not a drop of the sweet ointment might be kept back from His holy Head? If thus you stand in relation to the adornments of your life, then happy are you: "so shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man."

And this consideration I would urge upon you; that not only is a life of easy independence, with multiplied sources of enjoyment, a wasting of the noblest powers of man through its sensuality, however refined that sensuality may be; but in such a life you find openings into spheres of engaging interest, which profess to be mansions in your heavenly Father's house. I mean, for instance, that the pursuit of beauty and love of art may become the dominant interest of life instead of God. It may be made, not the honourable subject of a profession (for that, like other professions, is compatible with the Sermon on the Mount), but a study, a grave and earnest study, the work and end of your present being, as if you came into the world chiefly to bear witness to the truth of art; and then it is in the sight of Almighty God sheer *idolatry*.

Some, I am aware, carry this to the extent of saying that unless the artist has a pure love of God his art degenerates. One of the chastest writers upon painting with whom I am ac-

quainted" says, if I remember rightly, that painting was created for the service of religion, and that whenever it has divorced itself from that immediate service its genius has declined. And he, or some one following in his steps, points to Rafaele as an instance of this law, saying, that "when Rafaele forsook God, God forsook Rafaele." Some critics look to the great fresco in the Vatican, Rafaele's Theology, as the culminating effort of his greatness, after which, say they, his genius declined. A glorious work indeed, strong, and beautiful, and pure, and full of courage! But pardon me, if I think that those who ever said it was his *greatest* work said it only because they were standing with their backs to the School of Athens on the hinder wall.

In estimating the mutual influence of religion and art, I do not think that the cause of truth is forwarded by making the wish the father to the thought, and disparaging the worth of the art because the piety of the artist has declined. The truth is more nearly told by the author of these words, of whom all Oxford graduates are proud, even when they do not accept his creed,—
"The best art is the work of good, but of not distinctly religious men."

IV. You have been very patient: will you bear with me once more? The adornments you use ought to express in some intelligible degree the character of your mind. You know, with what a weary sigh of nausea you are ushered into rooms that represent nothing more than money and money's worth—furniture ordered by the upholsterer, and only paid for with a delicious sense of ownership by the lord of the household—paintings, furnished by a picture-dealer, and, to the sore resentment of the painter, counted “for garniture and household stuff”—books purchased by the shelf—plate amassed without a thought, except of the one condition, that it shall be as costly and as loaded with ornament as it can be. From room to room you pass with the throng, and see not one evidence of any taste whatever, not a scrap of personal history or character, but only the too palpable proof of so much vulgar wealth. And you turn from the sight in disgust, and say, that if these be the adornments of life, you prefer to be unadorned!

My sisters in the Lord, as you breathe that sigh, forgive me, if I pray you look to your own persons. Does your dress express your character? Is it an argument, by which you would have us prove your taste? It ought to be so,

according to the rules of art, if it be a true adornment! I am here neither to rebuke nor to approve. I am content to ask the question. The beautiful dress of women is, in my judgment, a very true and very innocent ornament of life. The noblest preacher among living Englishmen, himself an ascetic, did in his younger days commend the dress of women in these happy words, and now that he is old he does not repent the thought:—

“Ladies, well I deem, delight
In comely tire to move;
Soft, and delicate, and bright
Are the robes they love.
Silks, where hues alternate play,
Shawls, and scarfs, and mantles gay,
Gold, and gems, and crisped hair,
Fling their light o’er lady fair.
’Tis not waste, nor sinful pride—
Name them not—nor fault beside,
But her very cheerfulness
Prompts and weaves the curious dress;
While her holy thoughts still roam
Mid birth-friends and scenes of home.”³

But, I repeat, your dress should evince your taste, and betray, with reserve, some features of your character. Oh, let it be the taste of one

³ “My Lady Nature and her Daughters.” Verses on various occasions. 3rd edit. By Dr. Newman.

pure in heart, the expression of a meek and quiet spirit, the character of a child of God !

In your personal adornments by all means think of that which is proper to your state of life, at least never to exceed it : but think not first of that. You may have been born to beauty, or rank, or wealth ; but first you were born to image the grace and love of God. Think of the effect of your adornments upon yourself, in such matters as your love of praise, vanity, purity, simplicity, care for distinction. Consider its intention ; observe its influence on others ; what sort of feelings you intend to inspire, what character you wish others to recognize in you ! Is your dress and carriage in society such as will honour Christ ? Will it make men think, that with all your advantages of art, birth, youth, beauty, and wit, you have sold every other pearl, all you inherited and all you acquired, to win the one pearl of great price ?

O ladies, it was long ago the Virgin Mary lived, and times have changed, and fashions have come and gone ; but, I believe, the hearts of true men have not changed as to the nature they love to see true women have ; and surely the heart of Jesus has never changed towards His *Mother*. The blessed Virgin is your model. She is, in God's judgment of womanly character,

the Blessed one among women ! Think of her, dear sisters ; measure your taste by her's. Something must be wrong in a woman if she be very unlike Mary of Nazareth. She will not bring up children unto the Lord, unless in her maidenly and motherly ways she inspire her sons with a memory and vision of the beauty that Jesus loved. Oh the power of evil that you may work ! Oh the wondrous gifts you have for good !

Perplexity we are sure to have in harmonizing our use of created things with a singleness of devotion to the life unseen ; and so long as society lasts in Christendom, it will sorely puzzle thinking men to discern how much of it is the Church and how much of it is the world.

“ For rivers twain are gushing still
And pour a mingled flood,
Good in the very depth of ill,
Ill in the heart of good.”

Yet, after all, the problem of life must be solved by the individual soul ; and I do not think it will prove so hard to solve it, if a man turn his face honestly to God and pray to know His will.

One man may use these adornments freely, but with a temperance that comes of an ascendancy, which rules the whole life supremely for the love

of God, and such an one will require no sharper caution than Milton's calm and moderate advice,

"He, who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise."

Another will ever dread their tyranny ; and the presence of them in his home, even when they are found there without his choice, will aggravate in him the constant fear he has of self. He will not go back from a Lenten sermon to his house or his club without a scared and anxious look at all his surrounding comforts, dreading that he sees in them the foes in his own household. My effort this afternoon has not been made to stimulate that restlessness, though such disquietude is better than a sleep in sin. But be patient, brethren, with such uneasiness. That man's doubts may find their level by-and-by, either in the fearless use of these adornments, when his heart has been wholly mortified, and with a Christ-like will he has as good as crushed these treasures under foot. Or, he will go forth, like the bed-ridden victim, whose soul was first touched by the Saviour and then his body, and he will bear the bed of luxury, on which for years he softly rested, so that it becomes no more a rest, but a burden to his soul. Or, he will bear it right away as one

who masters it, and out of sight of old acquaintances will hurl it from him as only a painful relic of wasted years. I repeat it, be patient, brethren; be generous, if some beside you cannot any longer live as you do, and be safe. It is as much the will of God that they should live the ascetic life, as that you should do Him service in your homes.

Let me insist upon this point with all the energy I may. In every generation of the Church, the Holy Ghost from time to time will call men directly out of the state to which the world declares that they have been born. God will invite them to achieve a literal imitation of Christ's renunciation of these comely ornaments of life. They will seem to be as fools for Christ's sake, but they will be witnesses to burning truths which would else be quenched. They will raise the standard of all devotion in our land, and we shall be safer in our easy homes for the watch-fires they keep up with rigour on their hearths. Days of excessive wealth, when dress and furniture and equipages and systems of art are laying hold imperiously of the public mind, these are just the days when souls that follow Christ will, for their own salvation's sake, with no ambitious thought of influence, espouse a lot of hardness and the Apostolic life.

Be patient with them, ye that are rulers in society ; welcome them, ye rulers of the Church, and that with no niggard or timid hand, fearing lest they should take the Church into dangerous waters beyond her depth, but with a grasp that recognizes in that poverty the veritable mind of Christ.

The days will come, thank God, when *all* will be adorned, and none shall be afraid of beauty ; and the vile body, changed into the likeness of His glorious body, shall besit the ornaments, which He Who sits over the refiner's fire shall have ready in His hand. Meanwhile, being as we are, let the Cross with its five blood-red gems be the dearest adornment of a life hid with Christ in God ; and by-and-by, when all "the goodly stones" that make up our material life shall be rent asunder, and not one left upon another, you shall be built as pillars into the temple of the Lamb, and shall go no more out, built for ever and ever on the Corner-stone of Christ.

SOCIETY.

“I speak to your profit, not that I may cast a snare upon you, but for that which is comely, and that ye may attend on the Lord without distraction.”—1 Cor. vii. 35.

I HAVE taken my text from that celebrated passage of St. Paul, which, indeed, contains the general maxim “to use the world without abusing it”—the key-note of this whole series of lectures—but which seems to deal especially with the relation of the individual Christian soul to society—the peculiar subject for our consideration to-day. You will remember at once by the context that it treats that relation of the individual to the race of man in the most sacred form—the form of marriage and fatherhood. You may, if you have glanced at the original, have noticed the curious coincidence of language, which seems to mark either a direct reference, or perhaps a half-conscious allusion, to the famous contrast

of Martha and Mary, in what has been called the "Pauline Gospel." The word "without distraction"¹ is exactly the opposite to the "encumbrance" with much serving, which was the one element of evil in the activity of Martha. The command, to "wait upon the Lord,"² is couched in language which indirectly, but irresistibly, reminds us of the quiet sitting of Mary at the Lord's feet. The allusion is not only interesting in itself, but notable as turning our thoughts to an aspect of society, less sacred indeed, but most simple and natural—the hospitality, which is the earliest virtue even of half-civilized man, mingled with the reverence and the devotion which in it served the Lord, the type and the representative of the poor. Dealing, therefore, with the relation before us, first directly in its most sacred, and then indirectly in its simplest, form, it seems to be well fitted to be our guide in the somewhat bewildering vagueness and complexity of the subject on which we are now to enter. We take it up, I trust, not with the ambitious desire of original speculation, or the *dilettante* interest of merely hearing some new

¹ ἀπερισπάστως. Comp. Luke x. 40: ἡ δὲ Μάρθα περιεσπᾶτο.

² πρὸς τὸ εὐπάρεδρον τῷ Κυρίῳ. Comp. Luke x. 39: ἡ παρακαθίσασα παρὰ τοὺς πόδας τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἤκουε τὸν λόγον.

thing, but with a serious and practical desire to gain a hold of some Divine clue, to lead us through the labyrinth, which increasing civilization seems each day to make more bewildering in its intricacy ; and, in so leading, to save us at once from those forms of devouring evil—half human, half brutal—which lie in wait to destroy, and from the aimless wandering, which slowly exhausts the spiritual energy, and starves out the higher life of the soul.

But, whatever the difficulty of grasping our subject may be, it is free from one startling embarrassment which stood up before the preacher of last Sunday, darkening the way with the appearance of a barrier so formidable, that, if real, it was absolutely insurmountable. Christianity, we know, is the “imitatio Christi,” or rather the assumption of, the identification of ourselves with, the Christ Himself. To “be taught by Christ” is much ; to “learn Christ” is more. Now, whatever may have been the relation of His Divine life on earth to the adornments, which are God’s smile in Nature or Humanity, it is certain that that life was a social life. True, that it had its long secret communings with God, now brightening into the light of the Mount of Transfiguration, now deepening into the darkness of Gethsemane. True, that, like all the

greatest even of mere human souls, He had to ascend from the valley of love, to live alone

“ With Death and Morning on the silver horns,”

—alone, or only not alone, because God was with Him. But His life (contrasted by His own lips with the ascetic solitude of His forerunner) was social even in that sense, which I suppose our phrase “ Society ” must be taken chiefly to mark,—social, not only in cherishing, instead of wearing away or breaking, the nobler bonds of family love, of discipleship, of beneficence, but in unbending to the lighter, even the more sportive, influences of human society. It cannot be accident—for what *is* accident in the imperishable records of the Christ on earth?—that His first Epiphany of miracle shines through the genial brightness, the sparkling hopefulness of a marriage feast; and that the last gleam of farewell to common life, before the great week of the Passion, is at the supper in the favoured house of Bethany. And this beginning and this end are but specimens of a life which sought, which perhaps made it a part of its special purpose to seek, the society of men; even when it led Him to the cold magnificence of the feast of the Pharisee, or surrounded Him with what seemed the impure atmosphere of the company of the

publicans and sinners. Clearly, I say, that life was a social life. Shall we hold it reverent to think that this aspect was simply a form of its beneficence, a means of its sacred work, perhaps even a part of its burden?—that He passed through it with that mixture of sympathy and wonder with which a thoughtful man mingles with the sports and stirs the rippling laughter of children, giving all but receiving nothing? Or shall we, entering more fully, and therefore perhaps with more real reverence, into the truth of His perfect humanity, believe that such association was a part of its education to a perfection of breadth as well as depth? Shall we hold that even He tasted the lower blessedness of receiving, as well as the higher blessedness of giving, and “used without abusing” the society, which carries out the primeval law of humanity, “that it is not good for man to be alone”?

It is in this light certainly that we must regard the influence of society on ourselves. The whole principle involved in the well-worn phrase of “using the world without abusing it,” implies that such use is real and vital, not a mere indulgence to weakness, but a means of full and harmonious development of the soul. It is altogether an error in thought, a danger in

practice, to be always looking on the circumstances of our modern life with the negative speculation, How far are they allowable? instead of the earnest inquiry, How far and in what are they useful, as an ordinance of God for our good? Why need we look on the atmosphere of society, as if it were a tainted and unwholesome atmosphere, of which the only question is, how long we can breathe it without disease and death? Surely it is rather like the soft crisp air of some seaside resting-place, which may refresh us, when we have been struggling up the hills of toilsome difficulty, or passing through the pure chill region of solitary thought. Granting that I shall fulfil my task to-day best by dwelling, not so much on the more serious and emotional forms of society, as on those slighter and more superficial aspects, which, as at this season, glitter before our eyes, and fill our ears with the murmur and babble of the very lightest music—still it is surely impossible rightly to estimate these, without dwelling on the function of society as such in the true human development, and therefore of the place which it must occupy, as in the life of Christ, so in the Christ-like life of His members.

Why is it not “good for man to be alone”?

The answer is clearly that the law of balance, which seems to lie at the root of all physical things in our system, itself depending on the harmony between the central attraction of all and the centrifugal velocity of each separate body,—that this law, I say, reigns also in the system of Humanity. Our life is meant to be the result of two factors, and to rest upon the balance of two opposite forces. There is the power of individuality, concentrating each man upon himself,—to think, to speak, to act, that which his own spirit ordains, and his own will resolves. In virtue of it each man is alone, ought to be alone, must be alone, in life as in death—alone in self-knowledge, alone in responsibility, alone in conception of truth and in grasp of righteousness. But there is also the power of unity with others, embodied in a thousand mutual ties, strengthened by a thousand mutual needs, throbbing through a thousand chords of mutual sympathy and affection. In virtue of this it is possible, it is even a part of true humanity, to deny and ignore self, to forget our own individuality, to enter into what we call the “spirit of the age,” to extend the narrowness and shortness of individual life, by absorbing it into the greater life of a family, a nation, an age, a Church. What we call

“Society,” in the largest sense, is one chief means by which this appointed influence from without acts upon, and so developes, the inborn energies of the soul. It may act through the intellect by interchange of thought; it may tell upon the heart by the play of many sympathies; it may even guide the conscience, by the presentation to it of the moral teaching of others, and the moral influences, of which laws, institutions, and languages are full. But in all these ways it is just as much an ordinance, just as truly a blessing, as the power of individuality itself. To refuse it is to enter into but one half of our human heritage: it is to rely on the native energy of the plant itself, and perhaps the sunlight of Heaven, but to shut out the lower air and the fruitful exhalations of the earth.

All this seems, if we think of it, so obvious that it needs little explanation, so fundamental that it asks not for defence. But yet historically we know in the days past, and we see in less startling forms in the time present, that Christians—with the great facts of Nature lying before them, and with the life of Christ shining upon their thoughts—yet have fled from this society of man, as from a pestilence; or have at least hemmed themselves round with

barriers, through which it should make its way only by a few chosen and sanctioned entrances.

Nor are the causes of this far to seek. The first is the consciousness of the sin, which has so mingled itself with the life-blood of humanity, that the unity, which should have only spread the impulse of life, tends partly, it may be greatly, to propagate death. Some men have thought—naturally though unwisely thought—that they could keep out this haunting and tainting power by simple exclusion, and avert contagion by amputation or tight stern ligature of the connexion, along which the life of the body thrills to their own particular limb. But such action is deliberate violation of a law of our being; what can it bring but death? What can the effect be—what has it always been—but that, cut thus off from the general life, the limb itself festers by an inborn corruption, or stiffens into a lifeless paralysis?

And the other idea, though it be a nobler one, is hardly more consistent with the nature which God has given us. It arises from that deep and absorbing communion with Him, in which (as it has been well said) we are conscious only of two real existences—God and our own soul; we are impatient of all others, as either phantom unrealities, or as shadows of

evil, to dim the brightness and to dilute the intensity of that communion. We feel that there are times—the great crises which strain the very fabric of life—when we must be absolutely alone with God; we know that there are depths in us, which we cannot and dare not unveil to any eye but His; we are conscious of a thirst in our inmost spirit, which none but the living God can satisfy, and before which all the loveliness of nature and all the sweetest and tenderest society of man are but “a barren and dry land, where no water is.” And so men have thought that, to make life always spiritual, to open the human nature to a close unceasing communion with God, it is better to turn to Him in solitary concentration of soul, to cast away all the society of other spirits, to go out into the wilderness, if there we may meet God “face to face.” It is one of those attempts, perhaps most justly described as

“The last infirmity of noble minds,”

in which men will be wiser for God’s glory and man’s salvation than God Himself. They seek to rise above the atmosphere of this world, that they may be under the immediate sun of God’s presence. But it is with them in the spiritual, as we find it in the physical world;

instead of the diffused light brightening in varying shades of beauty over the whole vault of heaven, they see but a black sky and one intolerable radiance, to dazzle instead of enlighten, to scorch and not to cherish.

Both these ascetic views of life are clearly against nature, and accordingly nothing is more remarkable in the history of the ascetic life than the constant succession of magnificent conceptions and fatal degeneracies, of almost convulsive efforts at reform and the slow, sure overspreading of corruption. But they are not only unnatural; their unnaturalness takes the deadly form of spiritual selfishness, seeking to ignore human ties, at least to the great society of mankind, and to leave the world to destruction, if so be that we may save our own souls. While, therefore, they assume the glorious name of self-denial, it is clear that, instead of denying self, they fix the thoughts chiefly on self, to the exclusion of humanity; and therefore they meet with the sentence, "He that will save his life shall lose it." How utterly un-Christlike they are! how utterly unworthy even of the example of the Apostle, who "could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren's sake," to bring them to Him!

Yes, there must be, because there ought to be, the society of man; and God's providence has given it us in two different forms. There are ties wholly of His making, which we created not, but which we cannot break. The family, the nation, the Church—these are societies into which we are born or born again; and these are the societies which encircle the soul most closely, which call out its earliest and latest sympathies, which lay on it its most sacred duties. But there are also ties which we make by our own choice, and the impulse to which is harmony—not unison, be it observed, but harmony—of soul. There are ties of friendship and companionship; there is the tie of what we call especially “love,” hallowed in the sacredness of marriage; there are the ties, less close, but wider and freer, of voluntary association—political, social, philanthropic, religious—in which we Englishmen, perhaps, especially delight. Both these forms of society are equally, though in different ways, ordinances of God, acting in the one case without, in the other through, our own individual will. Under both, the soul grows up to the perfection for which He made it; under both, that growth must, therefore, be compatible with the true individuality which preserves self, and with the

all-absorbing devotion which "hides the life in God."

You may perhaps think, my brethren, that in all these considerations I have been carrying your thoughts too far away from the lighter and more technical sense in which the word "Society" is used, and dealing with subjects too large and too serious to be in any real connexion with it. But I venture to say No. That "society" which gathers its guests to the dinner-table, the ball-room, and the reception, which glitters so brightly in our parks and gardens, which crowds the theatre or the concert-room, is but an expression and a development of society in the larger and grander sense. It can be viewed and judged only as a part of the vast educating influence, which in that sense society exercises. It is merely, I know, a half-sportive form of that influence—a sparkling and glittering spray on the great wave of its progress; but even a mere spray will tell us how the tide is flowing on, and which way the winds of heaven blow. "For every idle word that we speak we shall give account," because in every thought, word, deed, done out of the spontaneous impulse, the thoughtless freedom of the moment, there is good or evil in principle, there is good or evil in effect. In some sense it may even be said that the serious

word shows what we would be, the idle what we are. And this society, light as it is, empty and transient as it seems, has a very real though often insensible power, and has, therefore, an important, though it may not always be an obvious, purpose in our complex life.

What is that purpose?

The first impression on the mind is that it is mainly, perhaps exclusively, relaxation and rest. Society should be restful. In realizing our own individuality—in concentrated thought, resolution, action—is work. In receiving impressions from without, whether from things or from men, which are suitable and natural to us, and in the almost unconscious play of the mind, which they stimulate in answer, is rest. And the true idea of cultivated and graceful society is just this absence of stern individual effort—just this receptiveness of a general tone, floating, as it were, upon its atmosphere—just this play of thought, feeling, imagination, which is drawn out without exertion, indicating but never entering upon the depths of thought and the grander realities of life. Let deliberate self-assertion, ostentatious exhibition, fierce struggle of opinion enter it, even in their better forms, and the very charm and beauty of society are gone—its function of relaxation is taken

away, and its bright freedom becomes heavy and wearisome labour.

We Englishmen, who "take our pleasure sadly," know, perhaps, less than others of this true function of society. In every rank of life, in the lowest most, but in all in their degree, we have learnt, perhaps, to work ; we still need to be taught to rest.

But I am inclined to think that this obvious function of relaxation is not all, perhaps is not the chief object of society. We all acknowledge that there are certain qualities, even in the purest and sweetest natures, which through society alone are (as we say) "formed"—trained, that is, from mere capacity into actual perfection of grace and beauty. It is through society that men are taught to receive—to appreciate the thought, to understand the character, to enter by sympathy into the feeling, to know the personal influence, of their fellow-men. That courtesy, which society demands and trains, and which even forms, apparently most artificial, of etiquette and of good manners embody,—do we not see in it, not exactly self-forgetfulness, but rather self-effacement, and submission to the lightest wish of others? True, that such courtesy must strike its roots deep in the self-denial of humility and of sacrifice, which is true

humanity, because it is "the mind of Christ Jesus," and which you will remember that our Lord Himself taught, through a parable suggested by the absence of this social courtesy at a feast. True, that what society produces without such deeper influence is like some bright exotic, almost unnaturally brilliant, but with no fragrance and with no root. But still it is true that the action of society, as such, does serve to form and to develop it, to give external grace to its inward strength and purity; still it is certain that he who lives either in the solitary life of thought, or the hard self-absorption of incessant work, he who never moves beyond the dear but narrow circle of home, does lose one influence which God intended, not indeed to strengthen or to deepen, but to soften, to enlarge, to refine his nature.

All this society gives us; and we, in return, seek to pay freely and gladly our contribution to the common fund of this pervading influence. It is not so high a duty, or so glorious a privilege, as that of conscious tribute to the treasure-house of human thought, to the grand fabric of law and order, to the living principles of truth and purity and love, to the life-giving spirit of religious faith. But yet it is a duty, and it is a privilege. I hold that the truest Christian is he

who follows here most closely the example of his Master, and disdains not to take his part in weaving even this slighter and looser thread of the cord which binds humanity in one.

There is, after all, but one danger which belongs to society as society, and that is, the danger against which St. Paul warns us in the text—the danger of dissipation or distraction. Other dangers there are in society as it is, but they belong, I conceive, rather to the accidents of society—to luxury and self-indulgence, to unreality and hypocrisy, to vanity, pride, and exclusiveness, and even to the effeminating influence of too unrestrained a worship of the beauty and adornments of life. These evils, I venture to contend, simply belong to human nature, as human nature. They need not be in society; it should be our effort to drive them out. They will be found elsewhere than in what is called society; they infest the solitary thinker and worker, like the unearthly phantoms of the hermit's cave; they establish themselves, in forms sometimes quite as base, although more decorous, in the most serious and religious companionships of life.

But the one essential danger of society is just the dissipation, which is always seeking new impressions and new excitements, which

leaves us no time to think and feel for ourselves, which does not merely temper, but actually overbears and destroys, our own individuality, which drifts on aimlessly, although restlessly, through the world, and being over busy (to use the Apostle's irony) has no business in life at all.² And that dissipation or distraction not only sins against the knowledge and consciousness of self; there is a worse count of treason in the indictment against it, which speaks of sin against the consciousness of God. The eyes are so dazzled with the rapid shifting play of earthly beauty and brightness, that the clear calmness of Heaven seems either too sombre or too terrible. The mind is so full of the opinions, the fancies, the brilliant imaginations of men, that it is incapable of the solemn reverence which is the only attitude of approach to God; it shrinks from the awful solitude and silence through which the soul passes to His presence. We need the solemnizing influence of self-knowledge, the bracing power of hard work and thought, the spiritual exaltation of faith, the intense fervour and aspiration of prayer, if we are to move through society without distraction, still able to be face to face with self, still able

² μηδὲν ἐργαζόμενοι ἀλλὰ περιεργαζόμενοι.—2 Thoms. iii. 11.

humbly and yet gladly to "wait upon God." Need I do more than remind a Christian congregation of Him Who, though He shrank not from human society, yet made His day work and His whole night prayer? Need I urge the obvious conclusion, that these divine talismans, which even a perfect humanity needed, it were utter madness for our weak and shallow and sinful natures to neglect? But it is in these—not in that flight from all society, which is as vain as it is cowardly, as foolish as it is selfish—that our true safety lies. Let us accept that society, be it what it may, into which God's Providence leads us; but let the knowledge of self, the spiritual self, which is Christ in us—let the consciousness of God, which is given by Christ with us—keep our souls so surely anchored, that no waves shall toss them on the restless sea of dissipation.

But while I have been speaking of what society, even in its lighter aspects, should be, has not the thought shot across your minds more than once—Is this, is anything like this, what our London society really is? You speak of rest and relaxation. Is it not so weary a round that the well-known saying, "Life would be tolerable but for its amusements," sounds not like a sarcasm, but like a bitter consciousness of the

utterer? You speak of the sinking and forgetfulness of self. Is not society the chosen scene of vulgar display, of aristocratic exclusiveness, of intellectual ostentation, of devouring social ambition? It may be so; the humourists, whom one of themselves called our "weekday preachers," tell us that it is so. But I maintain that it need not be so, that it ought not to be so, that it must not be so if our England is to flourish. There is no surer symptom of decay than a hollow and vicious, or a luxurious and restless society.

What then should we do, each according to his strength and opportunity, to make our society truer and purer and better? I indicate but a few brief answers, and then I leave the subject to your thoughts.

There is one service which we might render even to what I may call its material aspect. Surely we should strive for some greater simplicity. See how there has grown up already, see how every season there grows up more and more, an increase of luxury vulgar or refined, an ostentation, whether of wealth or æsthetic elegance, an inclination to make an elaborate business of society, either for ambition and vanity or (shame that we must say it!) for brilliant establishments and wealthy marriages. Need I say how this is destroying society, even as society?

What true society is there in entertainments where the whole object is expenditure in dainties and luxuries, or in rooms crowded to suffocation for fashion's sake, and for the mere paying court to greatness? The old spirit of simple and genial hospitality is crushed under the weight of pretentious and ruinous magnificence; the true brilliance and culture of society wither up in this ungenial atmosphere of ostentatious wealth and effeminating luxury. But, beyond the injury to society, as society, who can estimate the deadly influence on the character and the aims in life of those who should be the leaders of the nation, and those especially on whom rests the hope of the future? Can nothing be done, my brethren, to check this fatal progress? Is it quite impossible that some of those, whose rank and influence give them power, should combine to set the fashion of some greater simplicity—to break the gilded fetters by which, year after year, increasing wealth seems to degrade and paralyze our society? Such efforts have been known, such combinations have been seen, for the sake of tribute to national necessities, or for the sake of almsgiving to the poor. But I would appeal to you, brethren, as Christians—to you, whose Bibles teach you the danger of luxury, and whose Master set before

you the glory of a life rising by self-control above the vulgarizing and sensualizing power of material things. I would earnestly press upon you, in society, as in life generally, the duty of the Christian, for the sake not of his own soul only, but of humanity itself, to do what in him lies to stem this growing stream of luxury—this golden river, which by its touch hardens what should be food, and stiffens even life into a dead magnificence.

But far greater is our duty to what we may call the moral tone of society—to bring into it the Christ-like character and influence, to make it purer, truer, kindlier, ay, even godlier than it is. I am well aware that in society humanity is seen, as it were, at play. It is not a sphere in which we disclose those deepest thoughts and feelings of the soul which we can barely reveal even in the most intimate companionship, and which mostly belong to the times when we are alone with self or with God. It is not a place in which deliberate and formal teaching, in which the sterner protests of the moralist and the more earnest preaching of the saint can mostly do their service best. There are times when these should rise up there; but these are the times when a Belshazzar's feast needs the awful handwriting on the wall, or royal proflig-

gacy the scathing rebuke of a Baptist. Mostly it is the lighter, gentler, half-playful influences which keep the social atmosphere from dulness and stagnation. But is it impossible that in these lighter influences we should be able to recognize the higher elements of human character, shining through them, and telling by a diffused and tender radiance on the whole tone and colouring of social life? Why should not the sparkle of conversation and the glitter of jest and epigram be touched with the heavenly light of purity and kindliness, instead of the cruel brilliance of sarcasm, or those gleams of a low humour which are like corpse-lights over the grave of any true humanity? Why should truth of thought and nobility of tone be less beautiful than the tinsel of falsehood, less engaging than the spirit which mocks at all unselfishness and earnestness—too often itself an inverted hypocrisy, which is a tribute paid to vice by virtue? Why should it jar on the gracefulness and lightness of society that a man should show, without obtrusiveness, but without false shame and reticence, that, under all these things, he knows the seriousness and the awfulness of life, and that, knowing it, he has anchored his spirit safely, and thrown himself on the Eternal God? There can be no

reason, except the boldness of vice and the cowardice of the children of God.

And again, I venture to urge upon you, brethren, that there is a very urgent need for such Christian witness. These are days impatient of conventions and rules: it is well, if the impatience be a desire to dig down to the truths which underlie them; it is ill, fatally ill, if it denote a temper simply rebellious against all restraint. Is there no danger lest characters be tolerated now in society, which in the last generation would have been driven away indignantly, or starved out by a righteous coldness? Is it not true that a tone of conversation and manners is allowed, if not admired, which contemptuously disregards the restraints even of high breeding, much more of chivalrous delicacy and refined purity? Must we not trace something of an inclination to flimsy apology for vice, to an unbounded scepticism as to truth and morality, to a disregard of ancient loyalty and filial reverence, to light ridicule, as if the matter deserved not argument, of what it calls superstition? These things, in different degrees, you will surely recognize. Earnestly I would entreat you, if you care for better and nobler and purer things, not to be afraid to show it; if you are Christians, not to be ashamed of

Christ. And especially the appeal must come home to those whose womanly influence really gives the tone to society. Woe it is to see these lower influences in any; but woe thrice told, if you, women of England, touch them with even one of your fingers! if you suffer them to mingle with and degrade the feminine influence which makes true men! if you even condone them by your smile or by your silence! There is a service for all to the tone of society; but do not doubt that in that service the chief power, and therefore the chief responsibility, must rest with you.

And while we dwell on this part of the subject, I remind you (though it can be but by a passing word) that such service to the moral tone of society will tell even upon those forms of usage, which to so many are a pain and an offence. There are those who revolt against all the conventions of society, because they seem to them unreal and untrue, and against the exclusiveness, dividing society into its charmed circles and repelling those who have not the watchword for admission, which seems to them at once unnatural and unchristian. But these evils cannot be dealt with by mere abolition of social laws. Those laws are, like all other laws, clumsy and imperfect, but not useless or unne-

cessary attempts to embody great and subtle principles. Those polite conventions and etiquettes are but formal, and therefore inadequate expressions of the spirit of courtesy, which yields up its own will and counts others better than itself. Even those invisible circles of demarcation are only intended to guard the harmony of association, without which society is impossible; and, rigid themselves, to leave all at perfect liberty within them. The evil lies not so much in the existence of these things, as in the spirit in which they are used and acted upon. Convention need not become a cumbrous artificiality or virtual falsehood. Social divisions need not be laid down by arbitrary caprice, or preserved by haughty cruelty and spiteful ridicule. And therefore I repeat that the only real remedy against the evil lies still in that cultivation of a truer and a kindlier tone, on which I have dwelt as a part of the duty of the Christian to society. Under the atmosphere of truth the weeds of falsehood will never grow; under the genial breath of love, the icework of exclusiveness will melt away. Where the Christ-like spirit is present, that very presence will breathe a new life, into what may seem otherwise as the mere dry bones of the social organism.

Thus, my brethren, I have sought to suggest the real function of society and to indicate some of the forms of the service which through society the Christian may render to humanity. And at the last, I can only come back to the lesson with which the text began, Beware of dissipation. Remember that they who are the mere creatures of society, making what should be relaxation the business of life, must sink into a childish levity and a weary, hollow unreality. Remember that they who would do service to society must have some lever from without by which to move it, and must bring to it the freshness of some more thoughtful and sacred region. Therefore, I would urge upon you, not only the general truth that there must be a real inner unity under all the various scenes and aspects of life; and that this unity can be won only by a spirit centred upon God and hidden with Christ in Heaven—a spirit which strives and prays to grow up into His image, to give itself wholly to Him, to know the salvation of His Cross, to feel the pervading and transforming influence of His grace. But I would also urge the necessity of consciously limiting the sphere of what we call “Society,” consciously fostering and guarding the correcting influences which must tell upon it.

There must be time and will to be alone—alone in that quiet self-communing from which so many shrink—alone in the serious work and thought which bring out a man's true individuality—alone in the study, not the light reading, which is but another dissipation, but the study, which, while it enters into the thoughts of others yet has to ponder them and make them our own. There must be time and love for the deeper and more sacred bonds of life, for the close, sweet ties of home, for the individualizing affection of friendship, for the serious associations of those who seek the good of man, which is one side of the glory of God. And, above all, there must be time and longing for the earnest communion of the soul with God—not, again, only in exciting and emotional services, which sometimes even seem to be themselves a spiritual dissipation, but in the quiet, earnest meditation and prayer, which shuts out all the world alike of things and of persons, and, kneeling down in the solemnity of loneliness, lays hold of the Intercession of Christ, and is lifted by it into the awful and yet peaceful silence of the presence of God. It is by the spiritual power of such communion—not by mere negations, "Touch not, take not, handle not,"—not by arbitrary rules, which are sure to

be imperfect and unjust—that we shall “avoid distraction” as we move on through all the glittering sights and all the attractive music of human society. Still each will be his own true self; and even the wisdom of the world can teach us,—

“To thine own self be true,
And it will follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

But the self to which we would be true is not that natural and unregenerate self, of which we know too well the folly, the weakness, and the sin; but the new self, which is “Christ in us,” washed in His blood and regenerated by His grace, and so, like Him, not unclothed of true humanity, but clothed upon with the glorious vesture of the likeness of God.

POPULAR LITERATURE.¹

I PURPOSE to claim from you a high and hopeful estimate of the present "use" of Popular Literature, and to crave from you a cautious and clement criticism of the present "abuse" of Popular Literature. Suffer me in the outset to confess my deep regret, and to bespeak your indulgent forbearance, because other and worthier lips have not been engaged to reward your presence and patience for this meditation. My incompetency must take shelter under the apology made by one who needed no protection from a like audience when he was treating a like theme. "It is often our true humility to do what we are bidden, even while we know how

¹ *Prefatory Note.*—Some of the quotations from *living* authors in the following Sermon were not spoken at the time of delivery for reasons which may have been obvious to many who were present.

imperfectly we shall do it: this—rather than to withdraw from the proffered task in that pride which will not endure to attempt anything that it cannot hope to crown with perfect success.”²

Some fitness for the present undertaking I own to feel—that I am deeply conscious of the difficulties which await me—that I am in warmest sympathy with the subject so rashly allotted me—that I fervently espouse the alliance between religion and literature, which now I must seek to demonstrate and establish. I shall not do so great dishonour to this immense congregation as to suppose that any members of it can be unfriendly to the entrance of such a theme as this into such a place or time as this.

If “Knowledge is like the mystic ladder in the Patriarch’s dream, and great authors who have held the chain of science and philosophy, of poesy and erudition, are the angels ascending and descending the sacred scale, and maintaining, as it were, the communication between man and Heaven”³—if it is true that “Civilization is of

² Sermon at the celebration of the Tercentenary of William Shakspeare’s birth, by Richard Chenevix, Lord Archbishop of Dublin, p. 3.

³ Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli’s “Address before the Manchester Athenæum.”

the Sanctuary, kings being concerned only with *acts*, but the priest with *ideals*”⁴—then we are all in our right place to entertain the subject entrusted to our thoughts here and now. The motto of this sermon—the motto of this course of sermons may well be that which the most illustrious living doctor of the Church commended to the undergraduates of his own university, “*Theologus sum, nihil divini a me alienum puto.*”⁵ Nothing divine, therefore nothing “true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report”⁶ ought to be strange to us.

We may claim for the Church the power and province of universal sympathy with all that is good in literature, and the possession and prevalence of an unfailing remedy for all that is false in literature. We may assert for the Church that capacity which one in high station declares that she ought ever to exercise.

“The Christianity which is now and hereafter to flourish, and through its power in the inner circles of human thought to influence ultimately in some manner more powerful than now the

⁴ Alphonse de Lamartine.

⁵ Johann Ignaz Doellinger, quoted by Mr. Grant-Duff, in his Rectorial Address before the University of Aberdeen.

⁶ St. Paul, Epistle to the Philippians iv. 8.

mass of mankind, must be filled full with human and genial warmth, in close sympathy with every instinct and need of man, regardful of the just title of every faculty of his nature, apt to associate with and make its own all good whatever in him, which goes to enrich and enlarge the patrimony of our race."⁷

In old Arabian story we read of a boy-prince who brought to his father a fairy tent wrapped in a nutshell. When the tent was unfolded in the council-chamber, it encompassed the king and his ministers; taken into the court-yard it enshadowed a goodly company of the king's household and retainers; taken into the field it encanopied the whole army of the monarch. So do the borders of the Church widen ever more and more to shelter and sanctify all the expanding interests of life and literature, and give them consecration and completion.

Herein we assert no new claim, no new capacity, for the Church. She has ever been in the past, as she is in the present, as she will be in the future, the sanctuary of all that is true and pure in literature.

Lord Macaulay was never carelessly lavish

⁷ Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone.

of his compliments to the Church, but he candidly and generously avows "it was given to our holy religion to find retreats for art and letters among the huts of a miserable peasantry and the castles of a ferocious aristocracy—she provided an asylum in which one brother could employ himself in translating the *Æneid* of Virgil, another in meditating upon the *Analytics* of Aristotle, and a third in illuminating Missals. The Church has been many times compared to the Ark of which we read in the Book of Genesis, but never was the resemblance more complete than during those evil times when she alone rode on the deluge beneath which all the great works of ancient power and wisdom lay entombed, bearing 'within her that germ from which a more glorious civilization was to come."⁸ John Stuart Mill was never a rash applauder of any ecclesiastical influences, yet he manfully confesses that "the clergy were the preservers of all letters and of all culture, of the writings and even of the traditions of literary antiquity."⁹

These awards of praise are well merited. Look at the Kalendar of the Book of Common

⁸ "History of England," vol. i. p. 8.

⁹ "Dissertations and Discussions."

Prayer for this week. There await our reverence and honour the name of Saint Augustine for to-morrow, the name of Saint Bede for Tuesday ; or, search the pages of “ *La Divina Commedia* ” of Dante, the “ *Imitatio Christi* ” of Thomas à Kempis, the “ *Paradise Lost* ” of Milton, and confess that these are in ample witness to the close alliance between religion and literature, between faith and wisdom.

The Church has not struck her colours, changed her character, forfeited her place since the days of old. Like her Divine Head, she is “ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.”¹⁰ All that she did and dared in times of ignorance and violence, she can do and dare again whenever the same or subtler foes are on the attack or alert. “ *The Christian Year* ” of John Keble, the “ *In Memoriam* ” of Alfred Tennyson, the “ *Hymns of Faith and Hope* ” of Horatius Bonar, are among a goodly company of popular Christian authors who adorn the Gospel of Christ, and attract the admiration and affection of all religiously-disposed spirits.

Jean Paul was right in his avowal that “ as Christ with His pierced hands hath lifted empires off their hinges, so by His blessed words He

¹⁰ Epistle to the Hebrews xiii. 8.

bath turned the stream of centuries out of its channel, and He still governs the ages.”¹

If religion has thus proved herself to be the handmaid and helpmeet of literature, we need not fear to assert that the true aim of literature coincides with the true aim of culture and of religion. “The grace stored in Jerusalem, and the gifts which radiate from Athens,” can grow and flourish together unto perfection. A brilliant modern author² seems to doubt this. He candidly admits that the aim of culture coincides with the aim of religion in three very important respects. 1. That culture places perfection not in any external good, but in an internal condition of soul. 2. That culture sets before men a condition not of having and of resting, but of growing and becoming. 3. That culture holds a man’s perfection to embrace the good of others equally with his own. These three notes our advocate of culture consents to ascribe also to the voice of religion. But there is a fourth note of perfection, as conceived by culture, wherein the aim of religion does not, he says, transcend or even attain the aim of culture—“As an harmonious expansion of ALL the

¹ Jean Paul Richter, Werke, iii. 4.

² Dr. Matthew Arnold.

powers which make the beauty and worth of human nature, culture goes beyond religion, as religion is generally conceived among us."

We respectfully submit that religion has this highest and truest idea and hope of perfection, and that religion, "as generally conceived among us," is attaining this end at least as rapidly as the apostles of culture.³

By an easy transition, I can ask you to accept and adopt in full that the aim of literature is the same as the aim of culture, and these coincide with the aim of religion. If we separate these interests the sin lies at our door, and cannot be charged to the guilt of religion or of culture or of literature. When St. Columban saw the child Luanus ardently devoted to reading, the saint warned him thus: "My boy, many out of undue love of knowledge have made shipwreck of their souls." "My father," replied the boy, "if I learn to know God I shall never offend Him." The saint was charmed by the answer "Go my son," said the Abbot, "stand firm in that faith, and the

³ For an adequate and eloquent assertion of this claim, see the lectures delivered by the present Principal of the United College of St. Salvator and St. Leonard, in the University of St. Andrew's, entitled "Culture and Religion."

true science shall conduct thee on the road to Heaven.”⁴ So true is it that the voice of wisdom is the voice of God.

Again, if we compare this highest aim of literature with the aims of science, we stand on a loftier level when we tread the paths of literature than when we traverse the realms of science. Science, with all her safe progresses and sacred purposes, must yield to literature the palm of a more glorious victory. We are prone to seek our illustrations of the glory of God and of religion from the material universe, and the parallel is not unsound. We assign the sun for God’s vesture, the clouds for His chariot, the winds for His voice, the mountains for His strength, the valleys for His beauty, the vintage for His bounty. But this proneness tempts us to forget that the genius of a poet, of a philosopher, of a statesman, transcends in glory all these comparisons. “What is the loveliness of the purest island of the sea, compared with the bright and splendid visions of genius? What the pomp of gorgeous sunset, the grandeur of majestic mountains, the force of raging tempest, compared with the splendour and power of an intellect equipped

⁴ Quoted by Dr. Frederic William Farrar in a Commemoration Sermon at King’s College, p. 11.

with mighty arguments and with words of fire to master the prejudices, sway the passions, rule the judgments, direct the energies of a people.”⁵ God doth nowhere so magnify His name and His word above all things, as when, by His divine inspiration, He moves the pen to write noble and immortal song and speech. “No telescope will enable us to see God, no finest microscope will make Him visible in the act of working. No chemistry, no study of physical forces, no search after the one primary force can bring us one handbreadth nearer God. Science in the abeyance of our spiritual nature attains not unto God, but neither can it issue in any discovery that contradicts the kingdom of God.”⁶ Let all things have their place and power. Let mechanism and manufacture rear and adorn the vast abode of life. Let trade and commerce replenish life with their treasures, but when all this is done, there are wants still unmet and unsatisfied. There is a thought⁷ in the mind of humanity which longs to be uttered ;

⁵ Mr. Robert William Dale (of Birmingham), in a discourse at Stratford-upon-Avon on the Tercentenary of the birth of William Shakspeare, p. 6.

⁶ Dr. McLeod Campbell.

⁷ I think that I owe something, in the two sentences which follow, to Mr. Dale, but I cannot trace my indebtedness.

the heart of the world will break, if no voice can speak of relief; the sadness of the world will be unbearable, if no voice soothes its pain; the slumber of the world will be deadly, if no voice can speak to awaken it. This is the office and mission of true literature, to lift the heavy curtains of sense and materialism, and to unfold visions of beauty, to stand between the dead and the living, between the dry, dead matter-of-fact world which touches our senses, and that world of mystery and immortality which awaits our full fruition. Literature, in contrast with all grosser interests, confers upon us that twofold blessing enshrined in the phrase of Dean Swift, "Sweetness and light." Sweetness to soften and solace our own lives and the lives of our brethren; light to lead us into all truth, and to scatter for ourselves and for others the mists which gather about the thoughts and desires of our spirits.

Thus far I have tried to express the conviction that, 1stly, "literature has ever been cradled by Christianity, that literature owes its strength and development and permanence to the shelter of the Christian Church;"⁸ 2ndly, that every true author

⁸ Samuel, Lord Bishop of Oxford, in a speech delivered at the Festival of the Royal Literary Fund, 1855.

“ Looks beyond the book he has made ;
Or else he had not made it ; ” ⁹

3rdly, that “ True knowledge is not the computation of facts, but the creation of principles; not the burdening of the memory, but the strengthening of the mind; not the harness of the warrior, but the skill and sinew which makes him master of his weapons; not mere learning, which may be the possession of the pedant, but the power of assimilating that learning into the working materials of the mind and heart.” ¹ I have not sought to conceal that art and science and mechanics have done high and holy service to the world and to the Church. All these are among those things which

“ Having full reference
To one consent, may work contrariously ;
As many arrows, loosed several ways,
Fly to one mark ;
As many several ways meet in one town ;
As many fresh streams run in one self sea ;
As many lines close in the dial’s centre.” ²

But I do claim for the literature of a nation that it be regarded as the “ mightiest of all in-

⁹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in “ Aurora Leigh.”

¹ Rev. George Croly, LL.D., in an “ Essay upon Culture.”

² King Henry the Fifth, Act I. scene i. line 205.

fluences—as touching every spring of action—as moulding, in a thousand ways, the character of a nation's thoughts, sentiments, and life. If it were practicable to repress it, it is not desirable to repress it. What is left to us is, to elevate its tone and to improve its character.”³ This last challenge leads me to ask of your patience some brief consideration of the present “use and abuse” of popular literature. Can the prevalent aim and influence of our current literature be said to correspond with the high aims and aspirations which the Church has ever sought and has often found? Are we of this generation rightly using or recklessly abusing the matchless power which popular literature wields? Can our holy religion now find in popular literature a worthy handmaid and helpmeet for the fulfilment of divine behests? Certainly these questions have been answered in the affirmative by many who are far from being unanimous as to the more disputable points of Christian doctrine and practice.

In “John Wesley's Counsel to Young Men preparing to take Holy Orders,” we find this advice: “Combine with the study of the Holy

³ Dr. Joseph Angus' “Handbook of English Literature” (Religious Tract Society), p. 639.

Scriptures the reading of Edmund Spenser's 'Faerie Queene.' Saint Paul studied the comic writers of Athens, and in sacred leaves quotes them." ⁴

I heard the late Archbishop of Paris ⁵ address the students of the *Sorbonne* in these words: "Be not content with a narrow and meagre acquaintance with literature, but see that your more directly sacred studies help you to a wider sympathy and a warmer friendship for all that is true and beautiful in the literature of the past and the present. Religion has suffered from nothing so sorely as from the false accusation that she is inimical or uninterested towards the encouragement of popular literature. Whatsoever is good in it she has inspired, and aught that is bad in it she is able to correct or to cancel."

Time will fail me to pass in review more than two or three sections of popular literature, in quest of some token that religion is exercising a most healthy influence over letters, and is, in her turn, loyally recognized and constantly applauded and assisted by literature.

I. Unquestionably the most popular literature

⁴ Dr. Angus, *ut supra*.

⁵ Monseigneur Darboy.

in the world is that which is comprehended conveniently, though rather loosely, under the title of periodical literature—the daily and weekly papers, the monthly and quarterly magazines. The bare statistics⁶ of this branch of literature are astounding. In the kingdom of Great Britain alone more than 1500 newspapers are published. One hundred million copies of these pass through our post-office every year; and many millions more are read by dwellers in cities and in towns. One journal alone sends forth every day nearly 200,000 copies. What a freight of merchandize, precious in wisdom or pregnant with folly, is here launched upon the sea of human life! What various and thrilling messages are thus carried to myriads of hearts! Tidings of births and nuptials and deaths; news of good fortune and prosperity, of ill omen and accident, of safe arrivals or sad destruction, of glory and honour and praise and beauty, of shame and sin and disease! What trenchant criticism upon life, and men, and women, and law, and legislature, and literature, and society. The statistics of magazine literature are scarcely less startling. Six hundred and thirty magazines are published in this realm, and nearly

⁶ For which I am indebted to a friend, who has gathered them mainly from "Mitchell's Newspaper Press Directory."

300 of these are of an avowedly and decidedly religious character.

Do these figures point to the use or to the abuse of popular literature? Not exclusively to either; for I utterly repudiate the witness of one for whom, in common with all English Churchmen, I have a great respect. He asserts⁷ that "the press is against Catholic truth . . . that it is demoralizing and unchristian." I protest that we may well thank God and take courage that there is so much of loyalty to Christian truth, so much of fairness in the discussion of truth, so much of forbearance to publish aught that can disseminate evil and hurtful information. It is true that the law imposes some reticences, and common propriety imposes others; but far away from these necessities there is an encouragement of all that is true, and a denunciation of all that is false, which in my view is very hopeful and gladdening. I could multiply instances; let two or three suffice. A few weeks ago the startling theory of life and death, known by the euphonical name of "Euthanasia," was ventured in the pages of a weekly paper⁸ of great

⁷ Rev. S. Baring-Gould's "The Power of the Press," pp. 6, 7.

⁸ The *Spectator*, Feb. 15, et seq., with which cf. the *Portnightly Review* for Feb. 1873.

ability, intrepidity, and impartiality. The editors admitted correspondence which presented arguments for and against the theory. But the high and valuable judgment of the editors was boldly given against the ghastly and fascinating propositions of the newly-revived creed, and in favour of the blessed truth of God and of the Gospel. Very lately the leading journal in London advocated with warmth and wisdom the proposal to inaugurate an Hospital Sunday in London. Another journal² has recently sent out an accomplished correspondent¹ to aid the investigation of antiquities in the interests of historic and Scriptural truth. If any one shall reply that such discussions and discoveries as these are espoused by the press, only because the curiosity of the public rewards the insertion, then I am doubly pleased. The press uses its power to enrich sacred truth, to enhance sacred charity, and to enforce sacred doctrines; and "the people love to have it so." But shall we, therefore, go on to admit that the press is on the way to supersede the Church, and the teaching which the Church has in charge to give to the world? So thinks our

² *The Daily Telegraph.*

¹ Mr. George Smith.

most brilliant living historian²; for, on Saturday se'nnight, in an assembly-room close to this church, he avowed such a conviction. He raised some cheap laughter upon some poor jokes about the imbecility of the Church's discipline and influence, and about the waning of her power and the narrowing of her province. But the Church can and will afford to honour "the fourth estate of the realm," so long (as now) the press is the helpmeet and yokefellow and sympathizer of all truth and goodness. We like the liberty of the press because we know, by happy experience, that licence is rarely taken to write and circulate evil things. We believe of the present and for the future that which has been said of the past, "the influence of the press has extended with its liberty, but it has not been suffered to dominate over the independent opinion of the country. No sooner has the dictation of any journal, conscious of its power, become too pronounced than its influence has sensibly declined."³ Saving those exceptional instances wherein the press marshals its forces against truth and goodness, I know

² Mr. James Anthony Froude's speech at the Newspaper Press Fund Festival in Willis's Rooms, May 17th.

³ By Sir Thomas Erskine May, K.C.B., in his "Constitutional History of England," vol. ii. p. 220.

not of any "abuse" of this branch of popular literature. We may, and do often spend too much of time in newspaper reading, to the defrauding our minds of other and deeper studies. And so the newspaper may be to us not only in name but in truth a mere "Gazetta;"⁴ and the time we so spend may be only "a sort of beggarly day-dreaming, during which the dreamer furnishes for himself naught but laziness."⁵ But if we use in fair measure and discretion the abundant advantages which a free and cheap press confers, we shall find now and hereafter that the highest good and glory of the Church, the State, and the people, can be served by its ample wealth of power and influence and eloquence. And if there be need of refinement and improvement in the tone of the periodical press, we have it well within our reach to hasten that improvement and to aid that refinement. "The periodical literature of a people embodies the kind and extent of the social and intellectual progress they have attained. What the many read must accord in the main with the tastes and opinions

⁴ The name given to the first newspaper published at Venice, so called from the Italian "gázze-ra," a chatterer.

⁵ Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

of the many for the time, and as soon as tastes and opinions change, the tone of periodical literature will change also.”⁶

II. Next to periodical literature, by far the most popular and influential is the literature of fiction; to this enticing subject I have only time to dedicate a few words. That fiction has a most lawful and beneficial mission none can doubt; even those who assert that the reading of novels may become a snare, are yet prompt to avow that, “as an appeal to the imagination they deserve to be read, like the parables of Holy Scripture We need amusement, and a character well drawn, an incident well told, may be as worthy of our study as a beautiful picture.”⁷

That some works of fiction exercise an injurious and inexcusable influence none will deny. There is, of course, one class of novels hopelessly and terribly bad: with these we hold no parley and no controversy. But the remedy lies not in destroying the pen of the novelist, but in raising the tone of society. Truth is ever stranger than fiction, and the lives which we are

⁶ *Quarterly Review*, No. lxxxix. p. 327.

⁷ Religious Tract Society's “Handbook of English Literature, by Dr. Angus, p. 636.

living every day furnish materials which the ever watchful novelist promptly uses. The Church stands indebted for many sacred warnings and wakings, many social reforms to the influence of fiction.

Another class—commonly called “sensational”—can only receive from us a cautious and qualified praise. We must partly agree with the shrewd observer quoted by the late Dean of St. Paul’s,⁸ “I don’t like preaching to the nerves instead of the judgment.” If this marks a peril which waits upon some popular sermons, it is no less pointed in its application to much of modern fiction.

Nevertheless, such appeals to the nerves have been fruitful of blessing when uttered through the press as well as when delivered from the pulpit. What happy reforms have been wrought in our workhouses since the piteous tale of “*Oliver Twist*” was told. What hopeful improvements in schools for the boys of struggling tradesmen and farmers since the revelations of “*Nicholas Nickleby*.” What insight to the reforms needed in our prisons and lunatic asylums since “*It is never too late to mend*” and “*Hard Cash*” were written. And instances

* “*Letters and Lectures*,” by Dean Mansel, p. 215.

such as these are not wanting in any abundance. While if we remember the host of beautiful portraitures of human life and pictures of natural scenery scattered up and down the pages of many of our gentlest and truest novels, we may be right thankful for the gifts which the best among our novelists so graciously and beneficially use.

I need not fear to add even here, that the wit and humour of the novelist is not to be despised, but to be valued by those who live sober and anxious lives. For as the first preacher in this course of sermons well says,⁹ "It is to be deplored that there is too little wit in this world and not too much;" and if "The Pastor of Hermas" says truly that "sadness is the sister of doubt, mistrust, and wrath, while every cheerful man works well and thinks those things that be good," then we ought to be grateful for the rich bestowment and righteous exercise of powers wielded by the humorist¹ and the novelist.

Charles Lamb, in his quaintly pious way, used to say, "I own that I am disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in the course

⁹ The Very Rev. the Dean of Norwich, "On the Idle Word," p. 87.

¹ See the admirable pages of "Punch" *passim*.

of the day besides my meals. . . . Why have we no grace before spiritual repasts, a grace before reading the 'Faerie Queene''"²

I venture now the further statement, which I have yet not had time or chance to verify, that there are not wanting many signs and tokens of a steadily improving taste among the readers of popular literature.³

On the whole I confidently believe that the influence of popular literature is most beneficial to the highest interests of society, to the sacredest aims and ends of Christian truth. And I agree with an eminent Scotch divine⁴ that "when human thought and life are spreading out into ever-widening circuits, the Christian ministry must seek to show itself a debtor to men of every class and character, and must endeavour to prove that there is no department

² Charles Lamb's Works, vol. ii. p. 305 (1872).

³ Since the delivery of this sermon, I have been favoured by the kindness of Mr. Charles Edward Mudie with statistics which witness (1) that readers of "trashy" novels are diminishing in number; (2) that novels with a social, philosophical, or religious purpose are growing in number and popularity; (3) that the circulation of books in history, biography, travel, &c., is larger than the circulation of books in fiction.

⁴ Dr. John Ker, of Glasgow.

of thought or action which cannot be touched by the Gospel."

The serious duty and solemn charge are laid upon us, to see that in our contact with literature as in our contact with life, "we know how to refuse the evil and to choose the good."⁵ As John Ruskin well warns us, "in these days of book deluge, it is of the greatest importance to keep out of the salt swamps of literature, and to live on a little rocky island of our own, with a spring and a lake in it pure and good. A common book may give us amusement, a noble book will give us dear friends. It is of more consequence that books should be right than clever, not oppressively nor repulsively instructive, but that the thoughts they express should be just, and the feelings they excite generous."⁶

III. I must leave untouched and untraversed many fields of popular literature which yet would well repay our reverent and religious criticism and sympathy.

As my last word, let me add an earnest commendation of the most popular book in any literature, the most wise and sacred book in any nation.

⁵ Isaiah vii. 15.

⁶ "Elements of Drawing," p. 316.

I do not suppose that I am entitled, by the terms of my engagement to this course of sermons, to preach upon the study of the Holy Bible. For in the common appropriation of the phrase "popular literature," the Holy Scriptures are not included. But since the Word of God stands at the crown and summit of all literature—and since all true light which shines through any literature must have been kindled at the Altar of God, I need fear no rebuke from you if I end this discourse with an earnest entreaty that with us the Holy Scriptures may take highest rank as the Book of our life, the most popular book in our keeping. If we may measure the popularity of a book by its circulation, certainly the Bible does not lack. Sixty-eight millions of Bibles have been printed and distributed within this century—two and a half millions within this past year.

Yet how few among us constantly "read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest"⁷ that Holy Book? How do most men reserve their reading of it until the enforced leisure and painful peril of sickness send them to its counsels and

⁷ Collect for the Second Sunday in Advent.

comforts. Rather should we resolve with Robert Boyle to "use the Holy Scriptures not as an arsenal only for arms and weapons, not as a hospital only for healing of wounds and diseases, but as a matchless temple where to contemplate the beauty and symmetry of the structure, and to increase awe and devotion for Him Who is there preached and adored."

Why, even in a merely literary aspect the Bible is without a rival, and like our Prayer Book may claim to be "the great model of chaste, lofty, and pathetic eloquence."⁸ In that original and remarkable serial for working men which John Ruskin is now issuing, there is written this striking confession, "Walter Scott and Alexander Pope were the reading of my own early election; but my mother forced me to read the Bible from Genesis to Apocalypse, and to that discipline—patient, accurate, resolute, I owe not only a knowledge of the Bible, but the best part of my taste in literature. Knowing by heart the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, the sermon on the Mount, and other places of Holy Scripture,

⁸ Lord Macaulay's "History of England," vol. iii. p. 355. See also A. J. Beresford-Hope, M.P., in a lecture on "The Social Influence of the Prayer Book."

it was not possible for me to write entirely superficial English.”⁹

If from this literary aspect of the Bible we pass to its spiritual aspects, we shall find a still wider popularity attributable. In this respect “the rich and the poor meet together,”¹ that for all there is but one Book of Life even as there is but one way of salvation. “The heart makes the theologian”²—and the appeal which the Bible makes to the heart raises the Holy Scriptures to the highest pinnacle of popularity.

My last words shall be not my own, but words of one who dwelt in this parish, and whose name and life here and everywhere inspires reverence and affection. And thus I shall bring to an end a discourse which has been in all likelihood too long for your patience, too discursive for your satisfaction, even as in all certainty it is too unworthy of a place in the series of sermons which now is closed; albeit I have spared no pains, which my scanty leisure and skill could afford, to compass the difficult obligation imposed upon me, in the too short time allotted me.

⁹ “*Fors Clavigera.*”

¹ Proverbs xxii. 2.

² “*Pectus est quod facit theologum.*” The motto of Neander.

“To Holy Scripture we must look for our guide in everyday life, and our support amid everyday disappointments, amid the cares and vexations, amid the embarrassments and anxieties of your course, the wearying disgust, the thwartings of ignorance and selfishness, the misconstruction to which your every word will be subjected ; believe me that to guide and cheer and support you, you will need some higher incentive than that of human praise, some nobler reward than that of human ambition ; you will require the daily conviction that you are treading your allotted path of duty under the guidance of One with Whom is the result of all your labours.”³

³ Edward Geoffrey, Earl of Derby. Lord Rector's Oration before the University of Glasgow, 1834.

